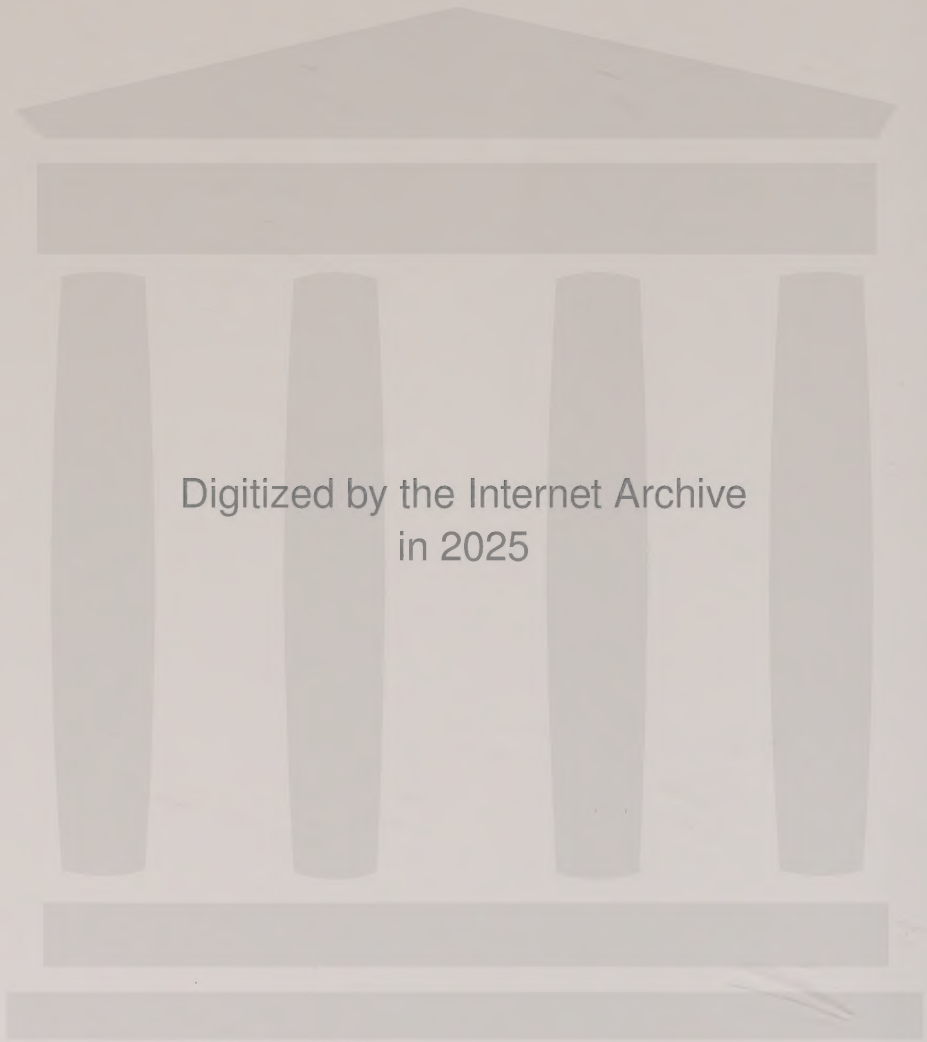
The Outline Of Literature Volume Three

John Drinkwater



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THE OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

A PLAIN STORY SIMPLY TOLD

EDITED BY
JOHN DRINKWATER

WITH ABOUT 500 ILLUSTRATIONS
OF WHICH MANY ARE IN COLOUR

IN THREE VOLUMES

★ ★ ★

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Part 3

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RIP VAN WINKLE

FROM THE COLOUR ILLUSTRATION BY ARTHUR RACKHAM

The legend of Rip Van Winkle and his twenty years of sleep in the spirit-infested Kaatskill Mountains is one of the most entertaining of the works of Washington Irving.

On the return to his native place, Rip Van Winkle's explanation of his lengthy absence was received, not altogether unreasonably, with incredulity.

The oldest inhabitant, however, Peter Vanderdonk, a man well versed in all the traditions of the neighbourhood, corroborated the story, Rip Van Winkle was allowed to settle down in peace, and we are told that "he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time.

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The Outline of Literature

XXVII

SCOTT, DUMAS, AND HUGO

SCOTT, DUMAS, AND HUGO

§ 1

SCOTT

THE publication of Walter Scott's *Waverley* in 1814 marks the beginning of the supremacy of the novel as popular literature above all other forms of literary art. The vogue of Richardson and Fielding had passed, at least for the moment. Mrs. Radcliffe's thrills had lost the charm of novelty. Maria Edgeworth never had a great public. The Waverley novels had their tens of thousand readers where Scott's predecessors only had their hundreds.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on August 15, 1771. His father was a Writer to the Signet, the Scotch equivalent to an English solicitor. His mother was the daughter of a professor in Edinburgh University. On both his father's and his mother's side Scott was descended from ancient border yeoman families. Scott was a weakling as a boy. The lameness that was his all through his life and which prevented him from being a soldier was due to the arrest of growth in the right leg in infancy.

A Collector of Romances

As a child living on his grandfather's farm he listened eagerly to border ballads and border stories, and when he was sent to the Edinburgh High School he had already acquired an unusual knowledge of the folklore and traditions of his native

land. While he was a schoolboy he set himself to learn French that he might thoroughly understand and enjoy old French romances, and before he was fifteen he had learned Italian in order to read Dante and Ariosto in the original. The Covenanter atmosphere of his father's house could not have been very congenial to this young and ardent collector of romances, but the unromantic home found its compensation in the fact that Scott, as a young man, spent all his holidays scouring the country-side searching for ballads and local legends.

In 1792 Scott was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates. He never practised in the courts nor indeed ever intended to practise. His ambition was to obtain official appointments of a not too exacting nature which would ensure him a living and leave him with leisure for literary work. This ambition was fulfilled. In 1799 he was appointed Sheriff-Deputy of Selkirkshire with light duties and a salary of three hundred a year, and seven years later he secured the reversion of the office of Clerk of Sessions. For six years he performed the duties without salary, and then for nineteen years he received a salary of £1,600 a year for work that took him, according to his biographer and son-in-law, Lockhart, three or four hours a day during six months of each year.

When he was nineteen Scott fell in love with Willamina, the daughter of Sir John Stuart. The romance lasted for six years, and then the young lady married William Forbes, who in after years was one of Scott's most devoted friends. Scott took his disappointment with stoical dignity, but, referring to the incident in his *Journal,* he professed that though his broken heart had been pieced together, "the crack will remain to my dying day." Willamina is immortalised in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel,* in *Rob Roy,* and in *Rokeby.*

In October, 1797, Scott married Charlotte Margaret Charpentier in St. Mary's Church, Carlisle. His wife was a beautiful woman, the daughter of a Lyons royalist who had been

Photo: Ruskin Collection. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Sheffield.*

"FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE." ROB ROY AND THE BAILIE

After the Painting by J. Watson Nicol. Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield.

Rob Roy is among the greatest of the Waverley Novels. The title was suggested by Mr. Constable, Scott's Publisher. Rob Roy MacGregor Campbell was the youngest son of Donald MacGregor of Glengyle. In his earlier life he followed the trade of a drover or cattle-dealer, but becoming insolvent he commenced the lawless life which lends to his name a glamour in Scotland equal to that of that other romantic outlaw, the English Robin Hood.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Sheffield.*

"THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL"

After the Painting by R. Beavis. Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield

"From Yarrow-cleugh to Hindhaughswair,
From Woodhouslie to Chester-glen,
Trooped man and horse, and bow and spear.'

The Lay of the Last Minstrel

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"THE TRIAL OF EFFIE DEANS," BY E. LANDER

The great trial scene in Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* at the moment when Effie Deans struggles with her guards in a vain endeavour to reach her father, who, realising that the hope to which he has secretly clung has now dissolved, falls senseless to the ground.

brought up in England. She possessed considerable strength of character, charm, and beauty, and though she was never able really to understand her husband, the marriage was tolerably successful, and after her death Scott referred to her as "the true and faithful companion of my fortunes, good and bad."

There is an unbroken consistency in Walter Scott's literary life. From *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* to the last of his novels he was intent on story-telling, and the stories that he told were deliberately offered to the reader as a means of escape from the commonplace. The seventeenth century in France and the eighteenth century in England were the centuries of classicism, ages in which the maker of literature was mainly concerned with correctness of expression. The greatest of all the French classic writers is Racine, whose unchallenged reputation hampered the development of French literature until the romantic revolt of the nineteenth century. The apostle of classicism in England was Dr. Johnson, who, despite the fact that he wrote the lives of the poets, may be regarded as the most typical figure of the century described as "an age of prose and common sense." The English romantic movement, of which Scott was one of the great figures, was a revolt against both the prose and the common sense, a protest against the realism of Fielding and the commonplace sentimentality of Richardson, an escape from the streets to the mountains.

The revolt began with the "Gothic" melodramas of Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Monk Lewis. It came to its height with the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley, and the historical romances of Walter Scott. We have seen that from his childhood Scott had an eager appetite for ancient stories and traditional songs, and he was therefore well fitted to take a leading place in the literary movement which sought beauty and interest in a picturesque past. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel,* in *Marmion,* and in *The Lady of the Lake,* Scott excited his readers with (to quote Hazlitt) "the interest

and curiosity belonging to a wild country and a distant period of time."

Poetical Works

His poetry is not of the greatest, considered as poetry, yet we return to it and love it. It has been accurately characterised by Sir Leslie Stephen: "It is not poetry of the first order. It is not the poetry of deep meditation or rapt enthusiasm. . . . And yet it has a charm, which becomes more sensible the more familiar we grow with it, the charm of unaffected and spontaneous love of nature; and not only is it perfectly in harmony with the nature which Scott loves so well, but it is still the best interpreter of the sound healthy love of wild scenery. Wordsworth no doubt goes deeper; and Byron is more vigorous; and Shelley more ethereal. But it is, and will remain, a good thing to have a breath from the Cheviots brought straight into the London streets, as Scott alone can do it."

The Lay of the Last Minstrel sold in far larger numbers than any English poem had ever sold before, and was a success because it was a story. It brought Scott nearly eight hundred pounds, and its success determined him seriously to regard literature as a profession. The second of Scott's long poems, *Marmion,* was published in 1808, Scott receiving a thousand pounds for the copyright from Constable, his Edinburgh publisher.

There are passages in *Marmion* that reach a high level. Constance, betrayed by Marmion, is about to meet her doom by the hand of the executioners; the bell is tolling:

> Even in the vesper's heavenly tone,
> They seem'd to hear a dying groan,
> And bade the passing knell to toll
> For welfare of a parting soul.
> Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
> Northumbrian rocks in answer rung,

To Warkworth cell the echoes roll'd,
His beads the wakeful hermit told,
The Bamborough peasant raised his head,
But slept ere half a prayer he said;
So far was heard the mighty knell,
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,
Listed before, aside, behind,
Then couch'd him down beside the hind,
And quaked among the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern.

Andrew Lang has pointed out the resemblance between the plot of *Marmion* and the plot of *Ivanhoe*. The poem tells a splendid moving story interlarded with many fine "purple passages" and ending with a sustained account of the last stand at the battle of Flodden which has no equal in modern poetry. Marmion himself was dying when news comes to him that the English had won the battle:

With that, straight up the hill there rode
  Two horsemen drench'd with gore,
And in their arms, a helpless load,
  A wounded knight they bore.
His hand still strain'd the broken brand;
His arms were smear'd with blood and sand:
Dragg'd from among the horses' feet,
With dinted shield, and helmet beat,
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion! . . .
Young Blount his armour did unlace,
And, gazing on his ghastly face,
  Said—"By Saint George, he's gone!
That spear-wound has our master sped,
And see, the deep cut on his head!
  Good-night to Marmion,"—
"Unnurtured Blount! thy brawling cease;
He opes his eyes," said Eustace; "peace!"

When, doff'd his casque, he felt free air,
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare:—

"Where's Harry Blount? Fitz-Eustace where?
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare!
Redeem my pennon—charge again!
Cry—'Marmion to the rescue!'—Vain!

. . . . . .

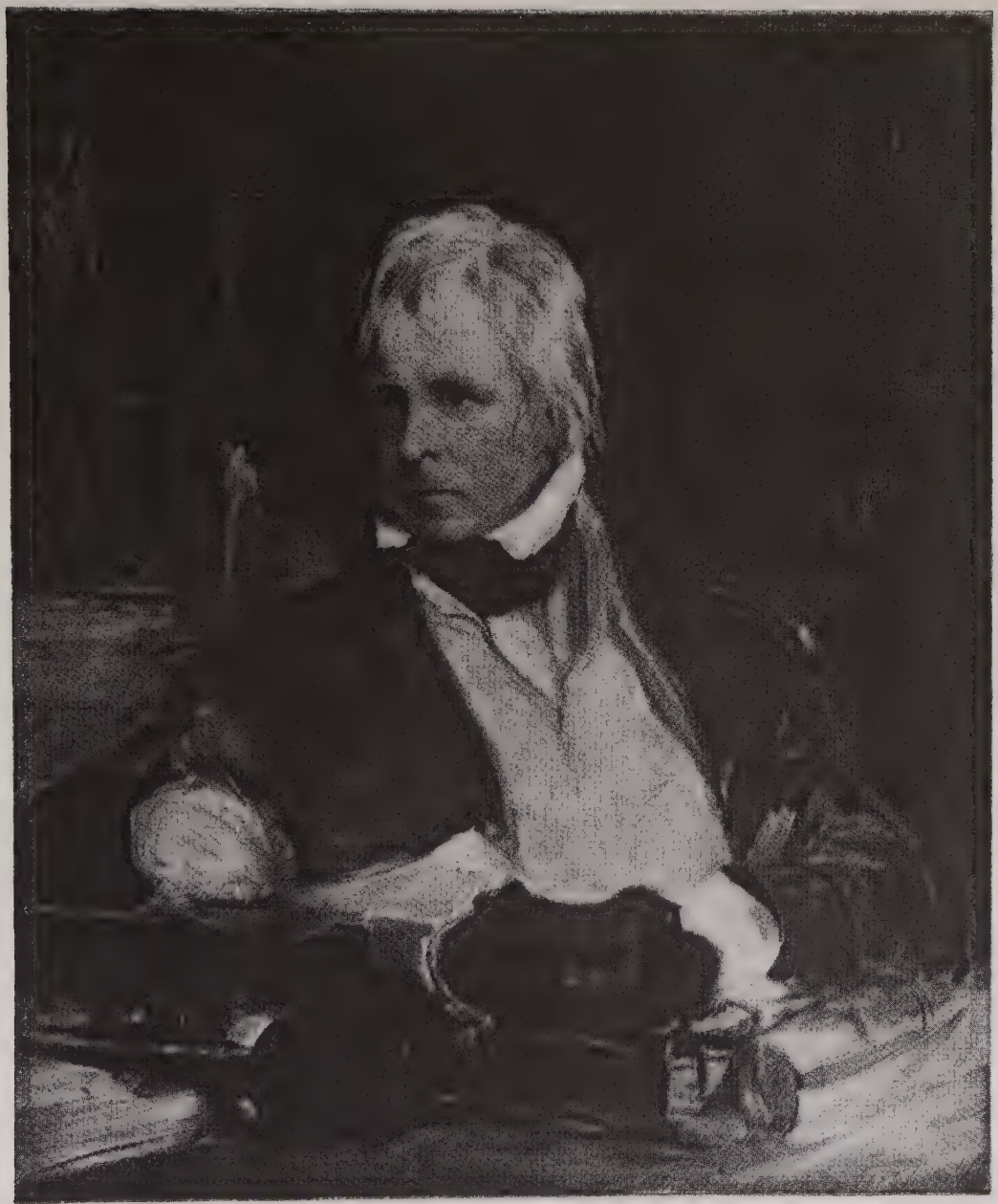
Let Stanley charge with spur of fire—
With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
Full upon Scotland's central host,
Or victory and England's lost.—
Must I bid twice?—hence, varlets! fly!
Leave Marmion here alone—to die."
They parted, and alone he lay;

. . . . . .

The war, that for a space did fail,
Now trebly thundering swelled the gale,
And—STANLEY! was the cry:
A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye:
With dying hand, above his head,
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted, "Victory!
Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"
Were the last words of Marmion.

What Andrew Lang calls the "inimitably vivacious" *Lady of the Lake* was published in 1810. Here again Scott retells old tales, introducing the element of the supernatural so characteristic of romantic literature, of its Monk Lewis banalities as well as its masterpieces. One of the finest descriptive passages in *The Lady of the Lake* is the chase of "the antlered monarch of the waste" described in the first canto.

The antler'd monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook,
Like crested leader proud and high,
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,



WALTER SCOTT

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR E. LANDSEER.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

Yell'd on the view the opening pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cower'd the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

Scott's one long poem, *Rokeby,* was published in 1812, to be followed by *The Lord of the Isles* in the following year.

§ 2

The Waverley Novels

Scott began to write *Waverley* in 1805. He put the manuscript by and apparently forgot all about it until 1810, when he finished the story in a few weeks of unremitting labour with a power of persistent application and almost unparalleled output which was his characteristic. It has been said that there is a striking consistency in artistic aim in all of Scott's writings,

but while this is true there is one striking difference between the poems and the novels. In the poems he is concerned only with romantic personages and highfalutin' sentiment. In the novels, as R. H. Hutton well said, "the business of life is even better portrayed than its sentiment." Scott could find no inspiration in the small happenings of ordinary contemporary life. He was bored by circumstances that, related by a realist of genius like Jane Austen, become interesting and intensely dramatic. But though Scott required a large canvas and striking colours, he is always interested in humanity, and the characters that he created which have most reality are always those that are least highly placed. In this respect his novels are in striking contrast with those of Alexandre Dumas. The fact is that when he sat down to write historical novels, Scott was also eager accurately to describe the characteristics of the Scotch people, to do for the Scotch what Maria Edgeworth had already done for the Irish in her *Castle Rack Rent* and other novels.

Scott's intense desire to paint true pictures of his own people made him a realist as well as a writer of romance. In the scenes of long ago he places men and women in whom the reader can believe, whose struggles and difficulties he can understand, whose flesh and blood are genuine, and who are of like passions with the people of to-day.

Of Scott's thirty-two novels, twenty-one have their scenes wholly or partly in Scotland, and of the other eleven, *The Fortunes of Nigel, Quentin Durward,* and *The Talisman* have Scottish heroes. *Waverley* was concerned with the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, an event which occurred in the generation immediately preceding Scott and which had left a scar on Scottish life that had by no means disappeared in Scott's own day. *Guy Mannering, The Antiquary, Rob Roy, The Heart of Midlothian,* and *Red Gauntlet,* all of them among Scott's best work, also belong to the eighteenth century. The scenes of *Old Mor-*

tality, A Legend of Montrose, The Pirate, Woodstock, The Fortunes of Nigel, The Bride of Lammermoor, and *Peveril of the Peak* are in the seventeenth century; of *The Monastery, The Abbot,* and *Kenilworth,* in the sixteenth; of *The Fair Maid of Perth, Quentin Durward,* and *Anne of Geierstein,* in the fifteenth; of *Castle Dangerous,* in the fourteenth; of *Ivanhoe, The Talisman,* and *The Betrothed,* in the twelfth; and of *Count Robert of Paris* in the eleventh. Only one of Scott's stories, *St. Ronan's Well,* dealt with the life of his own time, and that was a conspicuous failure. It will be seen from this list that Scott's work covers eight centuries, and if the list is considered by readers well acquainted with the novels they will certainly agree with Professor Hudson that those of them with "the greatest grasp of character, vitality, and spontaneous power are those which belong to the Scotland of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

The Scott novels are full of historical inaccuracies. One must not go to the novelist for facts. The anachronisms are well known. In *Kenilworth,* for instance, he puts quotations from Shakespeare into the mouths of his characters at a time when the poet was not yet in his teens. He takes Amy Robsart to Kenilworth, where she never was, and he brings the Young Pretender back to Scotland after Culloden. But details of this sort are of small importance. He who only knows facts, knows nothing of history. It is a far more cogent criticism of Scott to say that in his reproductions of mediæval life he has little appreciation of the characteristics that certainly gave the Middle Ages their dignity and probably gave them their joy, particularly that love of beauty which remains enshrined in the great Gothic cathedrals and finds humbler expression in every example of mediæval craftsmanship still in existence. The imagination of the novelist gives life to the dry bones of history. There are few more intriguing figures in historical records than Louis XI of France. The serious historian devotes pages and

chapters to the analysis of the character of the king who began the work of making France a united nation, the work to be completed by Richelieu and Henri Quatre. Scott succeeds in vividly portraying Louis XI in two paragraphs in the first chapter of *Quentin Durward.* The young Scotch adventurer, tramping to the Court of the French king, is himself a fine figure of romance.

Waverley was followed in 1815 by *Guy Mannering,* which was written in six weeks, and which Professor Saintsbury considers "perhaps the very best of the novels for merit of construction and interest of detail." It contains some of the most memorable of the Scott characters—Dominie Sampson, Meg Merrilies, Dandie Dinmont. *The Antiquary* was published in May, 1816, and *Old Mortality* and *Black Dwarf* were published at the end of the same year. *Old Mortality* is distinguished by its picture of Claverhouse. It is a stirring tale of the time of the Covenanters, and Scott introduces into it a suggestion of the supernatural in which he was always so interested. *Black Dwarf* is one of Scott's novels nowadays very little read. Andrew Lang thought the book "of little account," and on the other hand Prof. Saintsbury considers "the earlier part of *Black Dwarf* as happy as all but the best of Scott's work."

His Masterpiece

Rob Roy was published in December, 1817. While he was writing it, Scott was already suffering from the persistent cramp in the stomach which was to cause him so much agony during his later years. Rob Roy has the same reputation in Scotland as Robin Hood has in England, and the subject was therefore a popular one so far as the public north of the Tweed were concerned. Its heroine, Diana Vernon, is without question the most successful and most lovable of all Scott's heroines, another prominent character being the inimitable Bailie Nicol Jarvie. *The Heart of Midlothian,* by common consent Scott's master-

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

ABBOTSFORD: THE EXTERIOR FROM THE RIVER TWEED

Photo: T. & R. Annan.

"PEVERIL OF THE PEAK"

After the Painting by John Pettie

Peveril of the Peak, the longest of all the Waverley Novels, was published in January, 1823. It is one of the most complicated in respect to characters of Scott's works.

The scene depicted here shows the Countess of Derby entering the nursery at Peveril by means of a sliding panel, to the terror of the little Alice Bridgenorth

Julian Peveril, her playmate and future husband, is ready boldly to protect the little girl.

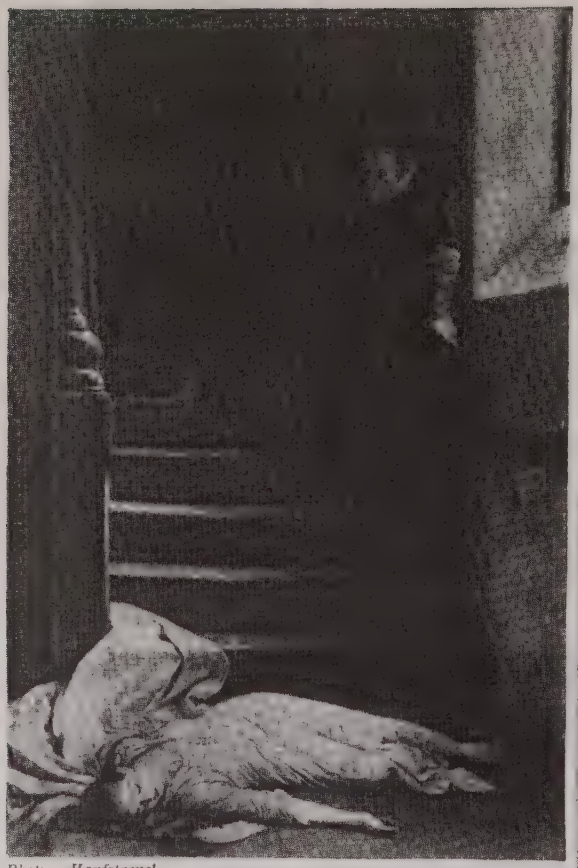


Photo Hanfstaengl.

AMY ROBSART

From the Painting by W. F. Yeames Tate Gallery London.

"Why, thou fool," said Varney, "look down into the vault —what seest thou?"

"I see only a heap of white clothes like a snow-drift," said Foster.—Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*

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D'ARTAGNAN

From the Dumas Statue by Gustave Doré.

This arresting conception of D'Artagnan by Gustave Doré forms part of the monument to Dumas the elder on which Doré was engaged at the time of his death in Paris on January 23, 1883. D'Artagnan the resourceful, gallant Gascon, is one of the greatest figures in romance.

piece, was published in June, 1818. Among a host of splendid characters it contains the admirable Jeanie Deans, who has become almost as real to us as Sam Weller himself. *The Bride of Lammermoor* appeared in 1819, a gloomy story the plot of which has been used as the libretto of a popular opera. The Master of Ravenswood is melodramatic, and Lucy Ashton is one of those pitifully pathetic heroines in whom it is always difficult to believe.

The Legend of Montrose belongs to the same year. It is not easy to disagree with Thackeray in considering Dugald Dalgetty, the rugged *rittmeister,* a secondary figure of the plot but the dominating figure of the novel, as one of the finest of all Scott's creations. Mr. Saintsbury suggests that not even Dumas could have created a character well described as "an admirable human being, a wonderful national type of the more eccentric kind, and the embodiment of an astonishing amount of judiciously adjusted erudition."

Ivanhoe, the first Scott novel with an English theme, appeared at the end of 1819. The dry-as-dust historian has been very busy pointing out historical errors in this great romance. But who cares? Let it be admitted that the two heroines Rebecca and Rowena are very dull young women (quite as dull as the typical Dickens heroine), but who has not rejoiced in the splendid passage of arms, the scenes in Sherwood Forest, the appearance of Richard Cœur de Lion, the whole glittering pageant of drama and colour. Incidentally Andrew Lang points out that Scott's vivid contrast between the characters of the Anglo-Saxons and their Norman conquerors attracted the studies of the French historian Thierry and led to interesting and valuable results.

The Monastery, a relatively dull story, *The Abbot,* distinguished by its picture of Mary Queen of Scots, and *Kenilworth* are the next in order of the novels. Queen Elizabeth appears in *Kenilworth,* which tells the story of the Earl of

Leicester and the luckless Amy Robsart, not perhaps the Elizabeth of history, but a very dignified and impressive monarch.

The Pirate, The Fortunes of Nigel, Peveril of the Peak, Quentin Durward, St. Ronan's Well, and *Red Gauntlet* followed in quick succession. *Peveril of the Peak* is admittedy a failure. So is *St. Ronan's Well,* a sort of Jane Austen imitation, bowdlerised by its author into futility to placate the prudery of his evil genius, James Ballantyne. *Red Gauntlet* was published in 1824.

§ 3

Despite his ill-health, Scott had worked harder than almost any other great figure in literary history, and his books had brought him fortune as well as fame. He received his baronetcy in 1818. He was a man of many friends and no enemies. He had a European reputation that equalled the reputation of Voltaire and Goethe. His country house at Abbotsford, which he had purchased and elaborated, was valued at fifty thousand pounds. He had spent three thousand five hundred pounds in buying a captaincy in the King's Hussars for his heir, the eldest of his four children. In January, 1825, he gave a grand ball at Abbotsford in honour of his son's engagement. And a few months afterwards he was practically penniless.

The Great Resolution

It is impossible to attempt to give any account of Scott's complicated financial arrangement with the Ballantynes and Constable, the publisher. He financed them, they advanced money to him, and the whole series of transactions can only be understood by an expert. James Ballantyne was evidently an extremely stupid person who never kept proper books, while Scott always lived "in a mist about money." Anyhow, the result was that, at the age of fifty-five, broken in health and al-

ready worn out with work, Scott sat down to write books which would pay off a debt of nearly a hundred and thirty thousand pounds. Was there ever a more magnificent resolution? "I will involve no friend, either rich or poor," he said; "my own right hand shall do it." He first finished *Woodstock,* a novel entirely written in three months, and sold it for eight thousand two hundred and twenty-eight pounds. Then he wrote his *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte,* an absolute "pot-boiler," the first two editions of which brought him eighteen thousand pounds. This was followed by a series of stories and essays. In two years he earned nearly forty thousand pounds (it is said that his income from his novels over a long series of years was between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds a year), and his grateful creditors met and passed the following resolution:

> "That Sir Walter Scott be requested to accept of his furniture, plate, linens, paintings, library, and curiosities of every description, as the best means the creditors have of expressing their very high sense of his most honourable conduct, and in grateful acknowledgment for the unparalleled and most successful exertions he has made and continues to make for them."

The Fair Maid of Perth was published in 1828, *Anne of Geierstein* in 1829, *Count Robert of Paris* in 1831, and *Castle Dangerous,* the last of the novels, in the same year. They are the work of a broken man, and it would be absurd to compare them to his earlier romances. His wife had died in 1826, and while he was slaving to pay his creditors he had two strokes of paralysis. He was at last persuaded that he must leave off working and rest, at least for a time. The Government put a frigate at his disposal, and in October, 1831, he sailed for Italy from Portsmouth. Wordsworth and his wife came to see him just before he left Abbotsford. During his tour Scott grew worse. While he was in Rome he heard of Goethe's death, and

then his one desire was to hurry home. He reached Abbotsford on July 11, 1832, and he died on Sept. 21st. Almost his last words was his admonition to Lockhart to "Be a good man, my dear, be virtuous, be religious, be a good man."

The Master Story-teller

Scott's place in literature is unchallengeable. He remains the master story-teller, as he himself said, sufficiently repaid if his "scenes, unlaboured and loosely put together, have sufficient interest in them to amuse in one corner the pain of the body; in another to relieve anxiety of mind; in a third place to unwrinkle a brow bent with the furrows of daily toil; in another to fill the place of bad thoughts or to suggest better; in yet another to induce an idler to study the history of his country; in all . . . to furnish harmless amusement."

Sir Walter Scott loved the open air and men of action and brave deeds and simple people. He was not to be daunted by misfortune, he never lacked in kindness or in courtesy. His friends were innumerable and his servants adored him. A finer man was never a great writer, and posterity owes him nearly as great a debt as it owes to Dante, Shakespeare, and Dickens.

§ 4

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

A Literary Adventurer

Stevenson described Alexandre Dumas as "the ventripotent mulatto, the great eater, worker, earner and waster, the man of much and witty laughter, the man of the great heart and alas! of the doubtful honesty." Alexandre Dumas the elder was a boisterous literary adventurer. He was the son of one of Napoleon's generals, who lost his master's favour by too plain speaking and was allowed to die in poverty and neglect. General Dumas was born in Saint Domingo, the illegitimate son of a French marquis and a negress, Marie Cessette Dumas. Alex-

andre Dumas arrived in Paris when he was twenty-one, penniless and unknown. Two years afterwards his first play, written in collaboration with Leuven, was produced at the Ambigu-Comique. For a year or two he wrote nothing but farces, probably because they were most easily marketed. It was from the production of a series of Shakespearean plays in Paris by Charles Kean in English, that Dumas received the impetus to romance. Until the twenties of last century Shakespeare was neglected by the French. Voltaire had sneered at him as a barbarian, and writers reared on the cold classic traditions of Racine were either ignorant of Shakespeare altogether or regarded his plays as of small account. To the France, however, of the barren years that followed the end of the Napoleon adventure, regretting the years of glory and military thrills, the colour of Shakespeare came as revelation and relief in a drab age. The beginning of the Romantic Movement in French literature is associated with the names of Dumas, Victor Hugo, and the great critic Sainte-Beuve. It is referred to at greater length in another section. Here one need only note how these French writers were influenced first by Shakespeare and then by Scott. "The poet of the modern world," said Victor Hugo, "is not Racine, but Shakespeare or Molière; for the object of modern art is not Beauty but Life."

In the enthusiastic determination to replace classic formalism with "red blood," Hugo wrote *Cromwell* and *Hernani* and Dumas wrote a whole series of romantic plays, all of which are now forgotten. One of these plays, *Richard Darlington*, was founded on Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*, and Dumas had certainly read many of the Waverley novels when he began, at the age of nearly forty, to write his great series of historical novels. Dumas, himself, was always eager to acknowledge his indebtedness. "Whenever I meet an Englishman," he once said, "I consider it my duty to be agreeable to him as a part of the debt that I owe to Shakespeare and Walter Scott."

Dumas claimed that he wrote 1,200 volumes. Most of his stories were written in collaboration, his best-known collaborator being Auguste Maquet. Even during his lifetime there was insistent discussion, to which Dumas appears to have been entirely indifferent, as to how much the novels owed to the collaborators and how much to him. After all it would not matter much to us if Bacon had really written *Hamlet* and Maquet had written *The Three Musketeers.* The fact, however, was that any literary hack who was associated with Dumas became for the moment a genius.

Dumas has been accused of plagiarism, an accusation which he himself never took the trouble to deny. In his novels there is never a particularly well-defined plot, but his genius for creating characters that attract and hold the interest, and almost the affection, of his readers is nearly equal to that of Dickens. His invention never failed. He was the master of witty dialogue and a matchless inventor of dramatic situations.

D'Artagnan

It has been well said of him that he wanted "no more than a room in an inn, where people meet in riding cloaks, to move the soul with the last degree of terror and pity." Stevenson loved D'Artagnan, and he loved him best in *The Vicomte de Bragelonne,* when he had "mellowed into a man so witty, rough, kind, and upright that he takes the heart by storm." But perhaps it is the young D'Artagnan, the needy Gascon adventurer, that most of the world adores. How vividly he is made to live!

> "Imagine Don Quixote at eighteen; Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue colour of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek-bones, indicating craftiness; the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which

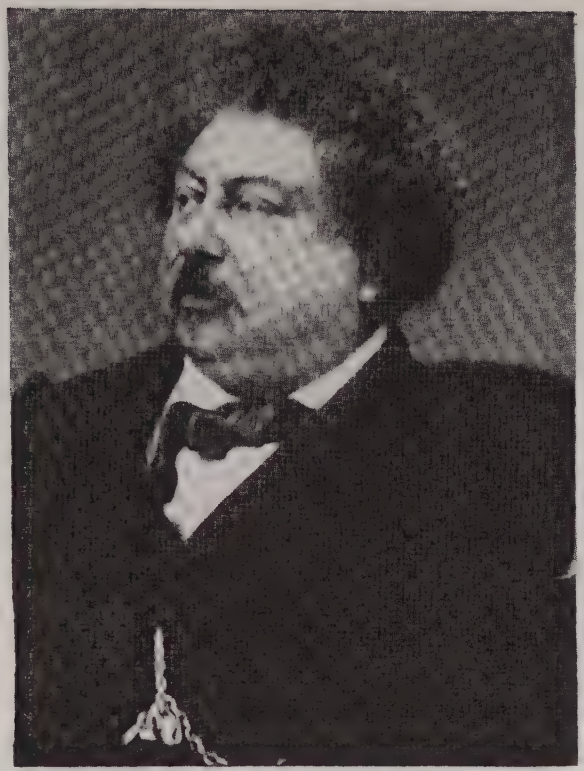


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

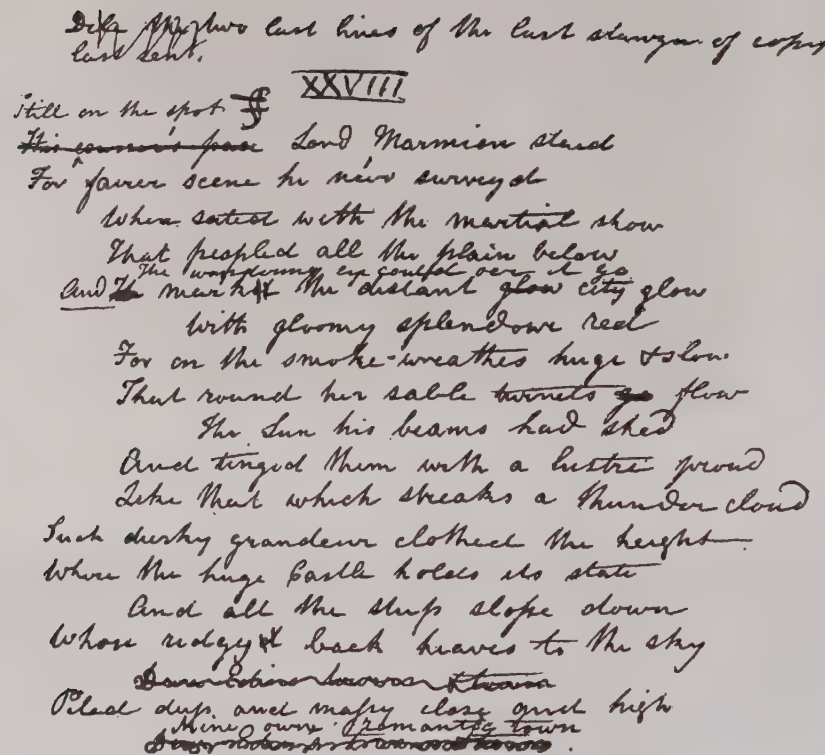
ALEXANDRE DUMAS, PÈRE (1802–70)

The famous author of *The Three Musketeers* and *Monte Cristo* was a Creole, and a writer of indefatigable industry and amazing imagination.

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

THE LIBRARY, ABBOTSFORD

Abbotsford, built by Sir Walter Scott, is situated on the right bank of the Tweed about three miles west of Melrose. Part of the beautiful house has now been converted into a museum containing relics of the novelist.



MS. OF *MARMION*

Marmion, the second of Scott's long poems, while hardly reaching the general high level of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, yet contains many passages which are a distinct advance on the earlier work. The merciless critic Jeffrey was disposed to admit that if it had greater faults it had also greater beauties.

a Gascon may always be detected even without his cap—and our young men wore a cap ornamented with a kind of feather; his eye open and intelligent; his nose hooked, but finely chiselled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey, had it not been for the long sword, which, dangling from a leathern baldric, bit against its owner's calves as he walked, and against his steed's rough side when he was on horseback."

And how fully justified is Stevenson's admiration:

"Here, and throughout, if I am to choose virtues for myself or my friends, let me choose the virtues of D'Artagnan. I do not say there is no character as well drawn in Shakespeare; I do not say there is none that I love so wholly. There are many spiritual eyes that seem to spy upon our actions—eyes of the dead and the absent, whom we imagine to behold us in our most private hours, and whom we fear and scruple to offend: our witnesses and judges. And among these, even if you should think me childish, I must count my D'Artagnan—not D'Artagnan of the memoirs whom Thackeray pretended to prefer—a preference, I take the freedom of saying, in which he stands alone; not the D'Artagnan of flesh and blood, but him of the ink and paper; not Nature's, but Dumas's. And this is the particular crown and triumph of the artist—not to be true merely, but to be lovable; not simply to convince, but to enchant."

Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* retains its place in England as one of the most popular romances ever published. D'Artagnan is as well known to us as Hamlet. The three musketeers, Athos, Aramis, and Porthos, are as familiar as Sam Weller and Tom Jones. The adventures of D'Artagnan are told in the trilogy, *The Three Musketeers, Twenty Years After,* and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne.* These three, with the Valois cycle—*Queen Margot, The Dame de Montsoreau,* and

The Forty Five—and that gorgeous romance, *Monte Cristo,* are the Dumas masterpieces. The first trilogy gives an amazing picture of the France of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, inaccurate maybe in dull facts but realistic in its colour and atmosphere. The second cycle does the same thing for the France of the Saint Bartholomew's Day era. *Monte Cristo* is a book without a peer. It is far too long. The second volume is extravagant melodrama. But the first volume is magnificent. The escape of Dantès from the Château D'If is one of the most exciting incidents in all literature.

Edmond de Goncourt has left a striking picture of Dumas, as he was towards the end of his life:

Dumas the Man

> "He is a sort of giant, with a negro's hair now turned pepper-and-salt, with a little hippopotamus-like eye, clear and sharp, and which watches even when it seems covered over, and an enormous face with features resembling the vaguely hemispherical outlines which caricaturists introduce into their versions of the moon. There is, I cannot say how, something about him of a showman, or of a traveller from *The Thousand and One Nights.* He talks a great deal without much brilliancy, without much biting quality, and without much colour; he only gives us facts, curious facts, paradoxical facts, stunning facts, which he draws with a hoarse voice from an immense store of memories. And he talks always of himself, himself, himself, but with a childlike vanity in which there is nothing irritating. He tells us, for example, that an article of his on Mount Carmel brought the monks there 700,000 francs (£28,000). He drinks neither wine nor coffee; he does not smoke; he is the sober athlete of articles and newspaper copy."

Dumas worked even harder than Scott, and for years his income was considerable. As De Goncourt has pointed out, his personal habits were simple. He neither smoked, drank, nor gambled, and, though he was fond of cooking, Albert Vandam

tells us that his favourite dish was "the beef from the soup of the previous day grilled." Yet he was always penniless. He once described himself as a *panier percé*, a basket with holes in it. Crowds of worthless men and women battened on him. He kept open house, and he often did not even know the names of the people who dined with him. At one time he kept a special secretary, called Hirschler, to attend to the writs with which he was constantly served. On one occasion a bailiff arrived at Dumas's apartments, and greeted his secretary as an old acquaintance. Indeed, he had an intimate acquaintance with every process server in Paris. After gossiping for a few minutes the bailiff told the secretary that he had come to distrain.

"Really," said Hirschler, "I did not know that things had gone as far as that. I must look into the matter."

It was a custom of the house to throw all law documents into one of the kitchen drawers. Hirschler went through the documents, found the bill in question, and suggested that the bailiff should accept payment of a third on account. This was agreed to, and the man of law was given an admirable lunch while messengers were sent to Dumas's various publishers to collect the money.

This kind of thing was a daily happening, and it is suggested that many of the novelist's debts were paid five or six times over.

Alexandre Dumas died in December, 1870. His one son, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, was the result of his father's liaison with Marie Labay, a Parisian dressmaker, and was legitimised when he was seven. The younger Dumas strongly disapproved of the vagaries of his prodigal father.

§ 5

VICTOR HUGO

"The Sublime Child"

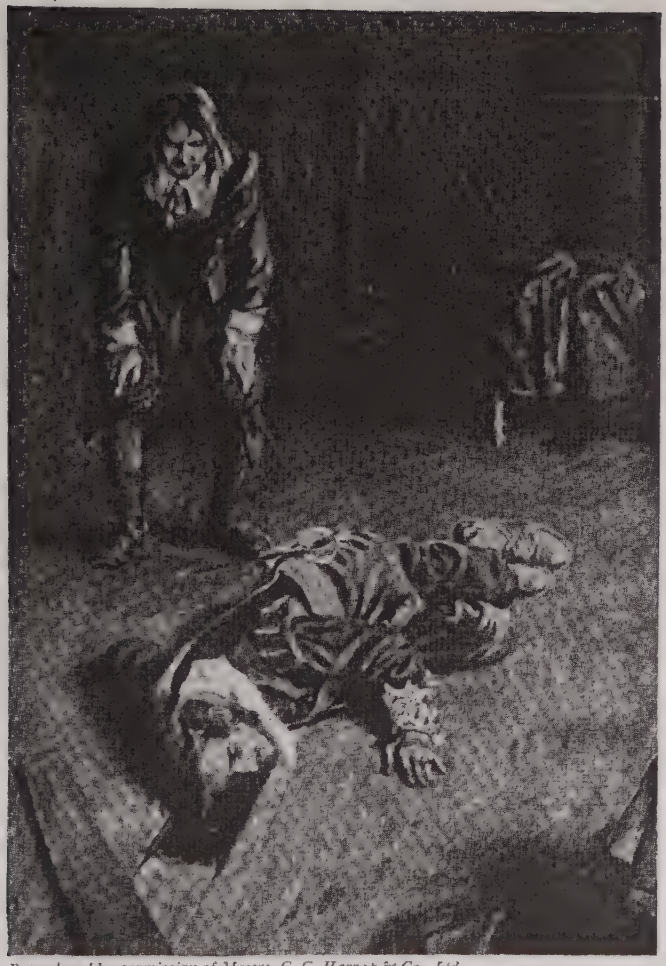
Victor Hugo was born at Besançon, Feb. 26, 1802. His father was a General in the Army, but his grandfather was a

carpenter, and, further back, his ancestors were peasants of the soil. As a boy he had three masters—so he tells us—a garden, an old priest, and his mother. But he had that within him which no master can impart, a seed of poetry which broke forth in early flower. At fifteen he sent a poem to the French Academy which gained him the title of "the sublime child." Another prize poem, a hundred and twenty lines in length, was written at a single sitting. So early and so great was the facility in writing which was to make of him the greatest improvisator the world has ever seen! Victor Hugo, when he died, was not so much a man as a literature.

In 1822 these poems were, with others, republished in a book, the sale of which brought him in a little money. What was more important, they caught the fancy of the king, who bestowed upon the youthful poet a pension of forty pounds a year. On this wealth he married. His bride was Adèle Foucher, the daughter of next-door neighbours, who, as a dark, vivid little beauty, had often been his playmate in his father's garden.

He now settled down to earn a living with his pen. Romances, plays, and poems poured from him in a cataract. In 1829 appeared *Les Orientales,* one of the most dazzling volumes ever written in the world. His reputation as a great new poet was no more in doubt. To other men of budding genius—Gautier, Balzac, Delacroix, Sainte-Beuve, De Musset, Mérimée, Dumas—he became a kind of idol. Gautier has related how, having obtained an introduction, he mounted, trembling, to the poet's flat, how, like De Quincey at the door of Wordsworth, he thrice retreated, how at last he screwed his courage up to knock, how he was welcomed by the young man with the serene pale face and falcon eyes, "and brow that looked as if it might have worn the crown or laurel-garland of a Cæsar or a god."

Now, what was it in these poems which awoke such homage? Let us recall the words of Théodore de Banville, himself a fine and gifted poet:



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"D'ARTAGNAN STRETCHED HIMSELF ON THE FLOOR TO LISTEN"

After the Painting by Rowland Wheelwright. Here reproduced by courtesy of Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

D'Artagnan overhears the assault upon Madame Bonacieux by the creatures of Cardinal Richelieu.

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"DEAR GRANDPAPA," CRIED SHE, "WHAT HAS HAPPENED?"

From *The Count of Monte Cristo.*

The story of Noirtier, the old Bonapartist who had lost the power of speech, and his granddaughter, Valentine, is the most sentimental episode in the whole complicated embroglio of the Dumas novel. Valentine was in love with Maximilian who was Monte Cristo's benefactor and it was owing to her grandfather's interference that she was saved from a loveless marriage arranged by her ambitious father.

> At times there appears a new work by Victor Hugo, and everything lights up, resounds, murmurs, sings. The shining, sounding, fascinating verse, with its thousand surprises of tone, of colour, of harmony, breaks forth like a rich concert. Every moment he adds something new to that swing of syllables, that melodious play of rhyme, which is the grace and the glory of the poetry of France.

That is rightly said. Everything is *new*—new in life and colour, in gorgeous imagery, above all in that haunting music which inspired the lines of Swinburne:

> But we, our Master, we
> Whose hearts, uplift to thee,
> *Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song.*

And then it is, emphatically, the poetry of the Muse who is "the singing maid with *pictures* in her eyes." When he rises from the *Orientales* the reader's mind is filled with pictures, as if he had been walking round a gallery of paintings. He sees the Sultan in his palace, surrounded by his lovely ladies, refusing to be comforted for the death of his pet tiger. He sees the young girl Sara, after bathing, dreaming naked in her swing, while a fly alights upon her rosy skin as on a flower. He sees the Cloud of Fire, driven by the voice of God, passing over sea and land, over Egypt, over the pyramids, the sphinx of rosy granite, the yellow Nile, the wilderness of sands, the tower of Babel with the eagles round it like a swarm of bees, until, when the Voice from heaven cries "halt" at Nineveh, it falls—and the scented singing city, with all its scenes of joyous sin, becomes a furnace of consuming fire. He sees—or rather, hears—the Djinns, those evil spirits, coming from afar at midnight over another sleeping city:

> Murs, ville,
> Et port,
> Asile
> De mort,

Mer grise
Où brise
La brise,
Tout dort.

The lines of each succeeding stanza grow longer and longer until the swarm comes rushing like a tempest overhead—then slowly dies away, even as the ebbing verse appears to die away, into the space and silence of the night.

It was such miracles of verse as this which caused somebody to speak of Victor Hugo as the Paganini of poetry. It might be more aptly said that he was as much the unique master of the orchestra of verse as Wagner of the orchestra of sound.

From these gorgeous pictures of the East he turned nearer home. The succeeding volumes—*Leaves of Autumn, Songs of the Twilight, Inner Voices, Sunshine and Shadows, Contemplations*—have for themes the simple things that touch the lives of every child of man. Some of the simplest are the sweetest: a mother dreaming by her baby's cradle, a lover singing at his lady's window, a child talking to her doll. But in *Les Châtiments* he put forth a book of Satires—fierce attacks upon "Napoleon the Little," and other objects of his hate and scorn —full of fire and fury, but, as it seems to us to-day, much of it invective overdone. Yet much also had all the skill and lightness with which Pope held up Atticus to ridicule and Dryden thrust his rapier into Zimri.

Apart from his successive works—his poems, plays, romances—three chief events marked Victor Hugo's life. In 1841 he was elected to the French Academy. In 1845 he was made a Peer of France. In the *Coup d'état* of 1851 he was expelled from Paris; a price was set upon his head, and he fled to Jersey, where, and afterwards in Guernsey, he made his home. There he put forth the greatest of his works, *The Legend of the Ages,* and another, one of the most beautiful, *The Art of Being a Grandfather.*

"The Legend of the Ages"

The first, and finest, volume of *The Legend of the Ages,* takes the reader, in a series of most vivid scenes, through the Ages of the world. It opens with Eve sitting by a lake in Eden, dreaming of the day when paradise itself would be diviner with the coming of that strange, new thing, a child. It closes with a terrific vision of the angel of the Judgment setting to his lips the trump of doom. In between, we have such scenes as that of Daniel, in his white shroud, saying, "Peace be with you, lions!"—of Ruth at the feet of Boaz, gazing at the moon, which some mighty Reaper had thrown down, a golden sickle, in the star-fields of the sky—of Eviradnus, the knight-errant, rescuing a lovely lady in an enchanted forest of romance—of Zim-zizimi, the great sultan, sitting on his throne, alone, after the splendour of the feast is over, when the rose-crowned sphinxes of white marble begin to speak. One by one they tell him of the doom of the great rulers of the world before him—of Nimrod, whose name was set upon the Tower of Babel; of Chem, whose colossal statue was of solid gold; of Cyrus, who drove four kings in harness; of Cleopatra, who bewitched the world. In terror and despair the Sultan dashes down the lamp. "Then Night came in and took him by the hand and bade him 'Come!' "

In striking contrast to these large and splendid pictures is *The Art of Being a Grandfather*—a book of the most sweet and tender studies of child life. Little Georges and Jeanne are five and six years old. In one poem, he takes them to the Jardin des Plantes. He marks their serious rosy faces gazing at the black mask of the tiger, with his eyes like two holes looking into hell. He jots down carefully their wise remarks—that the boa-constrictor has no clothes on—that the horns of the elephant are in his mouth—that you will do well to be careful, or he will beat you with his nose. In another poem he relates how Jeanne was shut up in the cupboard on dry bread, how he was detected by her mother in the act of smuggling to the prisoner a pot of

jam, how he was told that he deserved to be shut up in a cupboard also, and how Jeanne, looking up at him with soft eyes shining, whispered, "Then, Grandpa, *I* will bring a pot of jam."

There are more majestic verses in the world that we could better spare.

We have dwelt upon the side of Victor Hugo's work which we think is the most likely to survive. But there is another side which we must touch on. It is to be lamented that, as the years went by, he came to regard himself, not only as a great poet, which he was, but as a great philosopher, which he was not. More and more, large portions of his work were "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It is not too much to say that he has left us reams of rhetoric, of melodrama, and of extravaganza, which no man at the present day can read at all. But it is no less true that he has left us pictures that no poet ever equalled except Keats, lyrics as full of melody as Shelley's, and, at times, an "ocean-roll of rhythm" which is all his own.

§ 6

While Victor Hugo lives mainly as a poet, the greatest poet in the literature of France, his prose works have given him an even wider fame outside his own country. Prose is more translatable than poetry, and the readers of prose romances will always be more numerous than the readers of poems, however fine they may be.

It was as a playwright, stimulated at the beginning by a series of Shakesperean performances given in Paris by Kean, that Hugo may be said to have begun the romantic movement in France, but he ceased to write for the stage about the year 1858. Despite the splendour of their verse, his plays are essentially melodramatic and are now rarely revived, though *Hernani, Le Roi s'Amuse,* and *Lucrèce Borgia* have an important place in dramatic literature. Hugo's prose writing includes *Notre Dame de Paris, Les Misérables, L'Homme qui Rit, Les Travail-*

VICTOR HUGO, FROM A CARICATURE BY BENJAMIN

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QUASIMODO

The misshapen Hunchback of Notre Dame in Hugo's famous book. According to Victor Hugo Quasimodo was so ugly that "his whole person was a grimace," and again that "one would have often taken him a giant that had been broken and badly put together again."

Photo Rischgitz Collection.

"THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR"

After the painting by Millais.

The tale of Lucy Ashton and her love for the young Master of Ravenswood is one of the most tragic ever told by Scott.

leurs de la Mer, Quatre-vingt Treize, the fierce attack on Napoleon III which he called *Napoléon le Petit, L'Année Terrible,* an account of the events of 1870, and a volume of criticism which he called *William Shakespeare.* Of these, the early work *Notre Dame de Paris,* the great romance *Les Misérables,* published in 1862 while Victor Hugo was an exile in Guernsey, and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* are of the greatest interest and importance.

"Notre Dame de Paris"

Hugo was an intensely patriotic Frenchman and an equally patriotic Parisian, and in *Notre Dame de Paris* he has painted a vivid picture of the life of a mediæval city which had its scene and its pivot in the great cathedral which enshrined the city's dreams, and was in the Middle Ages, as it still is to some extent, the city's soul. In this romance, written when he was under thirty, Victor Hugo showed himself a disciple of Walter Scott. The principal characters of the story are Quasimodo, a hunchback, twisted in body but loyal in soul; Esmeralda, the steadfast heroine; and Claude Frollo, who is a sort of melodramatic Faust.

Quasimodo's overmastering love for the Cathedral is beautifully described in the following passage from *Notre Dame:*

> After all, he never turned his face to the world of men save with regret; his cathedral was enough for him. It was peopled with marble figures, kings, saints, and bishops, who at least did not laugh at him, and never looked upon him otherwise than with peace and good-will. The other statues, those of monsters and demons, did not hate Quasimodo; he looked too much like them for that. They rather mocked at other men. The saints were his friends and blessed him. The monsters were his friends and protected him. Thus he had long conversations with them. He would sometimes pass whole hours squatting before one of these statues, in solitary chat with it. If anyone came by he would fly like a lover surprised in his serenade. . . .

But that which he loved more than all else in the motherly building, that which awakened his soul and bade it spread its poor stunted wings folded in such misery where it dwelt in darkness, that which sometimes actually made him happy, was the bells. He loved them, he caressed them, he talked to them, he understood them. From the chime in the steeple over the transept to the big bell above the door, he had a tender feeling for them all. The belfry of the transept and the two towers were to him like three great cages, in which the birds, trained by him, sang for him alone; and yet it was these very bells which made him deaf. But mothers often love that child best which has cost them most pain. . . .

It is impossible to give any idea of his joy on those days when full peals were rung. When the archdeacon dismissed him with the word "Go," he ran up the winding staircase more rapidly than anyone else could have gone down. He reached the aerial chamber of the big bell, breathless; he gazed at it an instant with love and devotion, then spoke to it gently, and patted it, as you would a good horse about to take a long journey. He condoled with it on the hard work before it. After these initiatory caresses he called to his assistants, stationed on a lower storey of the tower, to begin. They then hung upon the ropes, the windlass creaked, and the enormous mass of metal moved slowly. Quasimodo, panting with excitement, followed it with his eye. The first stroke of the clapper upon its brazen wall made the beam on which he stood quiver. Quasimodo vibrated with the bell. "Here we go! There we go!" he shouted with a mad burst of laughter. But the motion of the great bell grew faster and faster, and as it traversed an ever-increasing space, his eye grew bigger and bigger, more and more glittering and phosphorescent. At last the full peal began; the whole tower shook; beams, leads, broad stones all rumbled together, from the piles of the foundation to the trefoils at the top. Then Quasimodo's rapture knew no bounds: he came and went; he trembled and shook from head to foot with the tower. The bell, let loose, and frantic with liberty, turned its jaws of bronze to either wall

of the tower in turn—jaws from which issued that whirlwind whose roar men heard for four leagues around. Quasimodo placed himself before those gaping jaws; he rose and fell with the swaying of the bell, inhaled its tremendous breath, gazed now at the abyss swarming with people like ants, two hundred feet below him, and now at the huge copper clapper which from second to second bellowed in his ear. That was the only speech which he could hear, the only sound that broke the universal silence reigning around him. He basked in it as a bird in the sunshine. All at once the frenzy of the bell seized him; his look became strange; he waited for the passing of the bell as a spider lies in wait for a fly, and flung himself headlong upon it. Then, suspended above the gulf, launched upon the tremendous vibration of the bell, he grasped the brazen monster by its ears, clasped it with his knees, spurred it with his heels, doubling the fury of the peal with the whole force and weight of his body. As the tower shook, he shouted and gnashed his teeth, his red hair stood erect, his chest laboured like a blacksmith's bellows, his eyes flashed fire, the monstrous steed neighed and panted under him; and then the big bell of Notre Dame and Quasimodo ceased to exist; they became a dream, a whirlwind, a tempest; vertigo astride of uproar; a spirit clinging to a winged crupper; a strange centaur, half man, half bell; a sort of horrid Astolpho, borne aloft by a prodigious hippogriff of living bronze.

The story itself is definitely artificial, but the book has outstanding value for its exact picture of mediæval city life.

"Les Misérables"

Les Misérables came thirty years later. Hugo had taken a considerable part in the troubled politics of his country, changing his opinions often, and moving steadily to the left; and his vehement opposition to Napoleon III had meant banishment from the city which he loved and where he had already become

a sort of literary god. It is curious and interesting that at this most unhappy period of a long and generally triumphant life, Hugo should have written the great romance of pity and sympathy. There is no more human and attractive character in fiction than Jean Valjean, the man of fine character, with a capacity for almost limitless self-sacrifice, forced by the pressure of circumstances to a life of crime, and after his reclamation hunted back to shame and suffering by the unescapable past. The benevolent simple-minded bishop to whom Jean Valjean owes his conversion is another splendid figure. All through the book, indeed, Hugo is concerned with the goodness of the individual and the cruelty of organised society.

The third of Victor Hugo's great romances is *Les Travailleurs de la Mer,* which was also written in exile in the Channel Islands. Jersey is the scene of this prose poem, which is concerned with the ceaseless struggle between the powers of nature and the soul of man.

Victor Hugo lived to a great old age, holding a position of reverence in the Paris of later days of the last century similar to that now held in England by Thomas Hardy, and in France by Anatole France. Swinburne had an immense enthusiasm for his writing, and it is at least partly due to the enthusiasm of the English poet that Hugo's genius has been so fully recognised in England.

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Excellent editions of the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott are published in the *Oxford Standard Authors* and the *Oxford Poets.* There are, of course, a great many editions of Sir Walter Scott's novels. The *Life* by Lockhart is accessible in various editions.

Alexandre Dumas: The principal novels of Alexandre Dumas can be obtained in English and American editions.

Victor Hugo: Several English and American editions.

Plays: *Hernani, Ruy Blas,* and *The King's Diversions.*

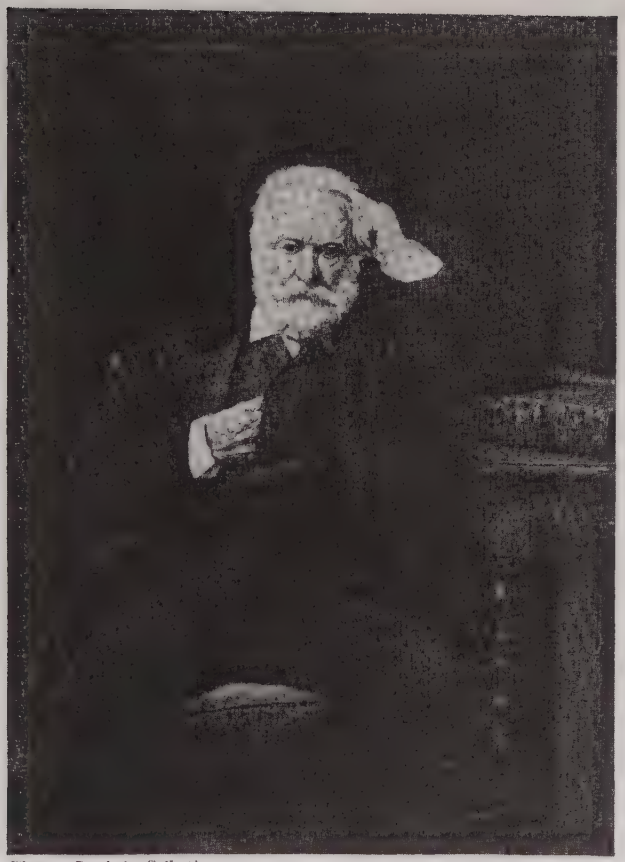

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

VICTOR HUGO, FROM A PAINTING BY L. BONNAT

Victor Hugo was the greatest of all the French romantic authors of the nineteenth century.

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LIFTING THE YOUNG GIRL ABOVE HIS HEAD AND CRYING "SANCTUARY"

The great scene in Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* in which Quasimodo rescues Esmeralda from the hands of the executioners, and carrying her within the precincts of the great church of Notre Dame where all temporal jurisdiction expires defies the representatives of the law

A. C. Swinburne's *A Study of Victor Hugo.*
W. H. Hudson's *Victor Hugo and his Poetry.*
Madame Duclaux's *Victor Hugo.*

XXVIII

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ESSAYISTS

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ESSAYISTS

CHARLES LAMB

§ 1

IN the chapter on Addison and Steele, it was remarked that the first decades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries alike witnessed new births in the Essay as a form in our literature. We have now to deal briefly with the second of these periods: the period of Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, and Leigh Hunt.

Of these four men, Lamb remains the most beloved, and, as Professor Saintsbury has remarked, "more nearly unique," not only among his contemporaries, but in all our prose literature.

Charles Lamb is for those who love Charles Lamb, and for no one else, and his style is for those who can savour it and for no others. As Canon Ainger says of the man: "Thoroughly to understand and enjoy Charles Lamb, one must have come to entertain a feeling towards him almost like personal affection. . . . It is necessary to come to the study of his writings in entire trustfulness, and having first cast aside all prejudice." Of his style he says, "It evades analysis. One might as well seek to account for the perfume of lavender, or the flavour of quince." To these judgments may be added that of another distinguished living critic, Mr. Augustine Birrell: "I run no great risk in asserting that, of all English authors, Charles

Lamb is the one loved most warmly and emotionally by his readers."

Elia, to give him his chosen name in literature, was born on February 10, 1775, in a house still standing, and marked by a tablet, in Crown Office Row, in the Temple. At that time an unpolluted Thames washed the southern boundary of the Temple Gardens. "A man would give something to be born in such places," Lamb writes in his essay, *The Old Benchers.*

In the Temple

He was the son of John and Elizabeth Lamb, his father being clerk and factotum to Mr. Samuel Salt, a Bencher of the Inner Temple. In the essay just mentioned Lamb draws a touching and beautifully convincing character-sketch of his father under the name of Lovel.

> I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and "would strike." In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pummelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion upon which no odds against him would have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bare-headed to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference, for Lovel never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. . . . Lovel was the liveliest little fellow breathing . . . had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a-fishing with.

It is a pity that it is necessary to curtail this portrait of the father, from whom, as Ainger says, Charles inherited his versatility, chivalry, and tenderness.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DE QUINCEY, BY SIR J. WATSON GORDON, R.A.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

The famous author of *The Confessions of an Opium-Eater.*

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE GENTLE ELIA

Lamb, sketched on copper from life in 1823, by his friend Brook Pulham.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

CHARLES LAMB, 1819, FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY G. F. JOSEPH
British Museum, London.

Perhaps the most lovable of all great English writers

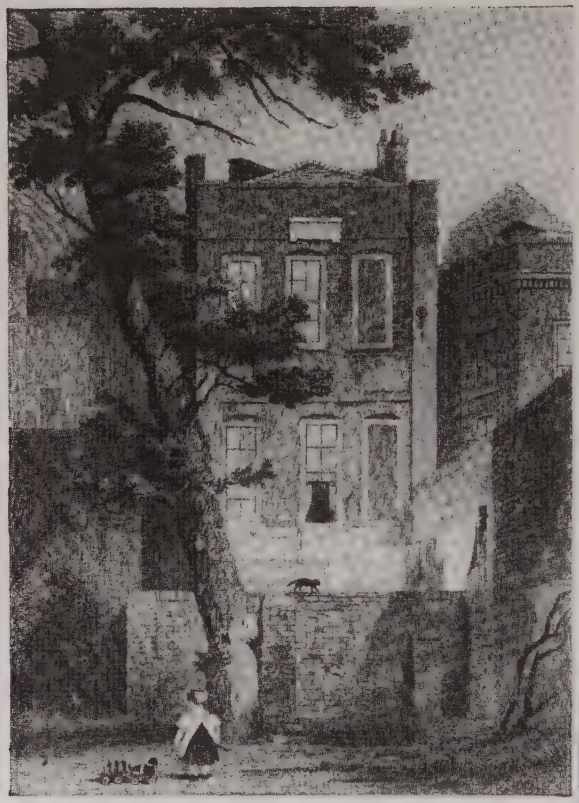


Photo: Raschguz Collection.

MILTON'S HOUSE IN PETTY FRANCE, WESTMINSTER

Hazlitt rented this house in 1812 and lived there till 1810

Photo: Raschguz Collection.

LAMB'S COTTAGE AT EDMONTON

While living here, the essayist fell and sustained a slight wound in the face. Unfortunately erysipelas developed and Lamb died on December 29, 1834.

Lamb in his Essays

Although it is impossible to know too much about Charles Lamb through his biographers and friends, all that is best worth knowing is to be found in his inimitable essays, contributed, mostly, to the *London Magazine*. These, in the finest and best sense, are egotistic. They contain the essence of his joys and sufferings, often veiled or disguised, even deliberately distorted (for he loved to mystify), but still the essence of all he knew and felt about life. You may read of his childish fears, superstitions, and haunting impressions in his *Witches and Other Night Fears, Dream Children: a Reverie, Blakesmoor in H——shire,* and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire.* His school-days at Christ's Hospital, where he was the companion of Coleridge and Leigh Hunt, are described in another essay. His recollections of his first business post—for he was a man of business first all his life—are deliciously set forth in *The South Sea House.* His early experiences as an amateur journalist are known through his humorous reminiscent essay, *Newspapers Twenty-five Years Ago.* Nearly all the portraits he draws in his essays can be traced to their originals. His "cousins," James and Bridget Elia, are his brother John and his sister Mary. Mrs. Battle's "opinions on whist" were those of a real old lady, possibly his grandmother, Mrs. Field, but more probably (as Mr. E. V. Lucas argues) Sarah Burney, the wife of Lamb's friend, Rear-Admiral James Burney, and the queen of a whist-playing circle. Ralph Bigod, the arch-borrower in *The Two Races of Men,* who believed that "money kept more than three days stinks" and who, in approaching a friend for a loan, "anticipated no excuse, and found none," was one John Fenwick, whom Lamb remembered from his old newspaper days. His beautiful story, *Barbara S——,* was an embellishment of real experience in the childhood of his friend, Miss Kelly, the actress. In his incomparably humorous and fanciful essay, *Amicus Redivivus,* he makes play with the eccentricities and absent-minded-

ness of his friend, George Dyer, whose character and habits gave him endless entertainment. Lamb, indeed, wove his own fancies and wreathed his memories round the men and women he had loved, the books in which he had read deepest, and the places and scenes with which he had been longest familiar. Nor did he exclude himself from his gallery of portraits. To the second series of his Essays he prefixed an account of himself purporting to be a tribute to "the late Elia," but really, of course, a playful yet penetrating study of his own character and way of life. There were elements in Lamb of which we commonly hear less than the truth; for he had his awkward sides, and he sometimes pushed his predilections and dislikes rather far. He writes of his failings with a humorous self-knowledge all his own.

> Few understood him, and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest, and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator, and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit* and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow, till, some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps, if rightly taken), which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten he continued to send away a whole company his enemies. . . . He had a horror, which he carried to a foible, of looking like anything important or parochial. He thought that he approached nearer to that stamp daily. He had a general aversion from being treated like a grave or respectable character, and kept a wary eye upon

> the advances of age that should so entitle him. He herded always, while it was possible, with people younger than himself. . . . The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but, such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings.

But here are elements both of exaggeration and suppression. Lamb never made enemies, as Hazlitt did; on the contrary, he grappled his friends to him with hoops of steel. They might sometimes resent, but they never forsook. And this self-drawn portrait is deficient in one most vital element. It tells us nothing of the dark and oft-returning thunder-cloud under which Charles Lamb worked, and wrote, and talked all his days. There was a terrible taint of insanity in his family. He had one fit of it himself, but was saved from another by his responsibilities, accepted to the full and with unfailing devotion, for his sister Mary who, in an outbreak of madness, had slain their mother. After her first cure, she was committed to his care, but her returns to hospital were frequent over many years. His father, too, died in imbecility.

The East India House

When the tragedy occurred Lamb was a young clerk in the service of the East India Company, in Leadenhall Street. He disliked his work thoroughly, but did it well and truly for thirty-three years, after which service he was awarded a generous pension. Lamb, therefore, was never an author by profession. Indeed, it may be said, he was never anything "by profession." He thought his own thoughts and found his own way through a life of toil and sorrow. Some kindly light, responsive to a light within him, led him on. He never married. Undoubtedly he had loved the "Alice W——n" of his beautiful *Dream Children: a Reverie*. He had worshipped, but only at a distance,

the young Pentonville Quakeress of whom he wrote his beautiful lines, *Hester,* of which these are the last:

> My sprightly neighbour, gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore,
> Shall we not meet, as heretofore,
> Some summer morning,
>
> When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
> Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
> A bliss that would not go away,
> A sweet forewarning?

But as early as 1796, when he was twenty-one, he had accepted singleness. Of marriage he wrote to Coleridge, "It is a passion of which I retain nothing. . . . Thank God, the folly has left me for ever. Not even a review of my love verses renews one wayward wish in me." Strange to say—and it is a very late discovery—Lamb did, more than twenty years later, when he was forty-four and receiving a salary of £600 a year, make a proposal of marriage to Fanny Kelly, the actress. Her affections were engaged; she refused his written offer with tenderness and gratitude, and, as Mr. Lucas says, "his little romance was over, a single day seeing the whole drama played."

Lamb's private joys were all in old books, good talk, and friendships that were sincere but never too fastidious. He hated profession, humbug, and every kind of pose. He preferred to belittle his faith rather than declare it. In the following passage from his essay *New Year's Eve,* we have the essence of Charles Lamb's character and expressive power. He is writing on that subject—inexhaustible as life—the approach of death.

> In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away "like a weaver's shuttle." Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable

> draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity, and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country: the unspeakable rural solitudes and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacles here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived. . . . I do not want . . . to drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave. Any alteration, on this earth of mine . . . puzzles and discomposes me . . . a new state of being staggers me. Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candlelight, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with Life?

All that Lamb himself knew of these good things of life went out with him on December 27, 1834, when he died in his last home in Edmonton, and was carried to his long home in Edmonton Churchyard.

§ 2

WILLIAM HAZLITT

When William Hazlitt, perhaps the most incisive and variously endowed of English essayists, died in his lodging at 6 Frith Street, Soho, on September 18, 1830, at the age of fifty-two, he surprised those at his bedside—among whom was Charles Lamb—by saying, "Well, I've had a happy life." For his life had not contained many of those elements which we commonly associate with happiness. He had more than once formed mistaken estimates of his true vocation and had suffered accordingly. He had been twice married; to be divorced by his first wife, and deserted by his second. He had quarrelled much, and had estranged many friends. But he had been ever a fighter, and had lived and thought intensely: therein was his happiness.

Mr. Augustine Birrell puts the truth broadly when he says: "William Hazlitt had to take a thrashing from life. He took it standing up like a man, not lying down like a cur; but take it he had to do. . . . He reaped what he sowed, and it proved a sorry harvest."

Hazlitt was the son of a Unitarian minister of some distinction, who, at the time of his son William's birth, presided over a meeting-house at Maidstone. Later, the family was at Walworth, London, near the old Montpelier Tea Gardens. Hazlitt was now nine, and the earliest and freshest of his memories to be found in his writings concern this spot. In his essay *Why Distant Objects Please,* he has this passage which may be quoted as an excellent example of his style—a style always marked, as here, by gusto and felicitous quotation:

> When I was quite a boy, my father used to take me to the Montpelier Tea-gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now? No; the place is deserted, and its borders and its beds o'erturned. Is there, then, nothing that can
>
> "Bring back the hour
> Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?"
>
> Oh! yes. I unlock the casket of memory, and draw back the warders of the brain; and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes. A new sense comes upon me, as in a dream; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out; my eyes dazzle; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again. My sensations are all glossy, spruce, voluptuous, and fine: they wear a candied coat, and are in holiday trim. . . . All that I have observed since, of flowers and plants, and grass plots, and of suburb delights, seems to me borrowed from "that first garden of my innocence"—to be slips and scions stolen from that bed of memory. In this manner the darlings of our childhood burnish out in the after years, and

derive their sweetest perfume from the first heartfelt sigh of pleasure breathed upon them,

> "like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour!"

The Boy and the Book

The elder Hazlitt settled definitely, at last, at Wem, in Shropshire, where for twenty-five years he remained in charge of a small Unitarian community, and here his son's youth, up to the age of twenty-two, was spent. He became his father's pupil and, more and more, also, his intellectual companion. Browsing in his library of theological and metaphysical books, and taking long solitary walks in the country, the boy acquired a strong bent toward philosophical and metaphysical inquiry which was to a certain extent to prove a misleading road in his life. But his discursive reading now took in fiction, as we learn from his essay *On Reading Old Books.* We see the birth of Hazlitt's critical genius in such a passage as this, with its rapture and unction:

> Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise, —with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page!—Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal!* This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

"O Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life!"

In how many a young man has the love of literature been kindled by Hazlitt when he writes like this! Such inspiring and awakening passages abound in Hazlitt's essays. No beginner on them should delay to read *My First Acquaintance with Poets,* in which he relates his first meeting, as a youth, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was his father's visitor to Wem. His description of his walk with the poet-philosopher between Wem and Shrewsbury is for ever memorable. Recalling it, he says:

> Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can one not revive past times as one can revisit old places? If I had the quaint muse of Sidney to assist me, I would write a "Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury," and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer Hill stooped with all its pines to listen to a poet as he passed! . . . On my way back, I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy; I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry.

Yet when Hazlitt had to step out into the practical world, and shape a career, it was to Art, not to Literature, that he looked for joy and reward. His brother John was an artist of ability, who had studied under Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Hazlitt wished to be an artist too. His studies in Paris, and his first dreams among masterpieces, can be only referred to here. He had to recognise that he was not much better fitted to be a painter than to be a minister. Art was to be his unfulfilled dream and happy retrospect. His essays gave him not half the pleasure that he had sacrificed when he at last laid down his brush in despair. But when he ceased to be an artist, he had become our earliest stimulating art-critic. Those who wish to realise the joy which an artist takes in his work and, equally, the joy which the layman can get from it, should read his essays *On the Pleasure of Paint-*

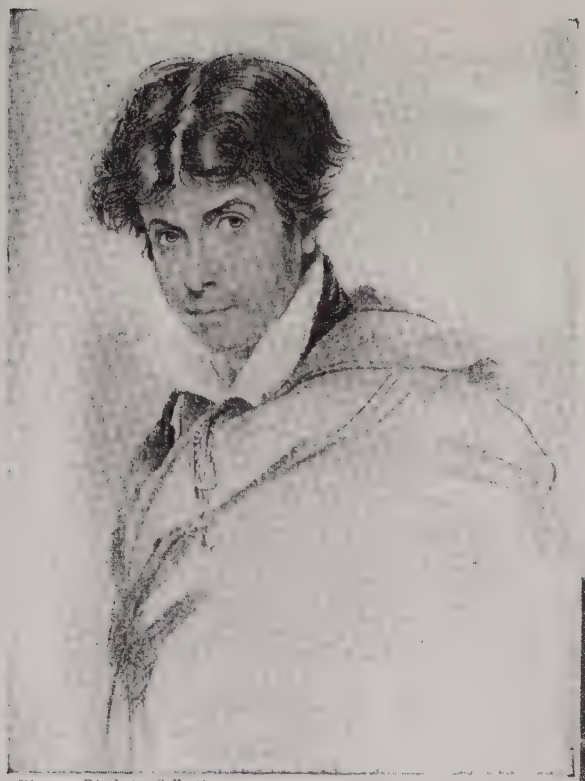
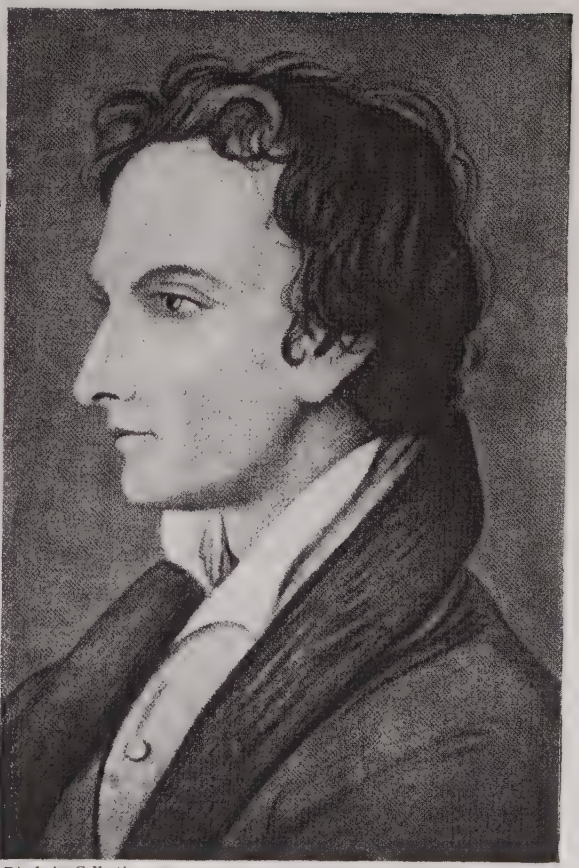


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

LEIGH HUNT, ENGRAVED BY H. MEYER FROM A DRAWING BY J. HAYTER

Leigh Hunt, poet and essayist, is said to have suggested Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House* to Charles Dickens



Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM HAZLITT, FROM A CRAYON DRAWING BY W. BEWICK

Hazlitt was a man of definite and often harsh judgments, a perfervid admirer of Napoleon and critic of unquestioned honesty.

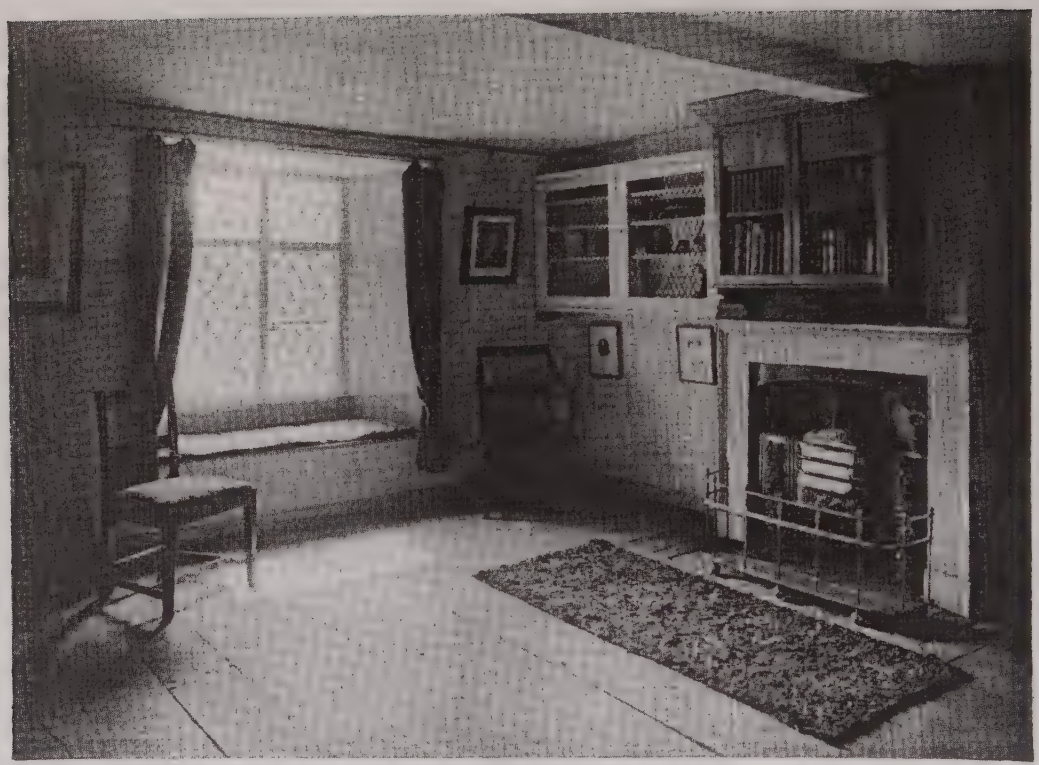


Photo: Walmsley Bros., Ambleside.

DOVE COTTAGE, GRASMERE. DE QUINCEY'S HOME FOR NEARLY TWENTY YEARS. OCCUPIED FOR SEVEN YEARS BY WORDSWORTH

ing, A Landscape of Nicolas Poussin, On the Picturesque and Ideal, The Old Age of Artists, A Portrait of an English Lady by Vandyke, and his wonderfully reported *Conversations of James Northcote, R.A.*

The Essayist

In 1808, when he was thirty, Hazlitt married Miss Stoddart, a sister of Dr. Stoddart, who became editor of *The Times.* They settled at Winterslow, near Salisbury, where they shortly received a visit from Charles and Mary Lamb. Four years later they removed to London, and to the house, No. 19 York Street, which had been one of the London homes of Milton. Hazlitt now needed literary employment, and be brought to the market the readiest of pens. He was also drawn to lecturing, and he gave a course of ten addresses on "The Rise and Progress of Modern Philosophy" at the Russell Institution. Later he gave courses of lectures on the "English Poets," the English "Comic Writers," and "The Age of Elizabeth." He soon found much work to do for the *Morning Chronicle* (many theatrical criticisms), the *Champion,* the *Times,* and the *Examiner,* in which his *Round Table* essays appeared. It was in these brilliant discursive essays that Hazlitt found himself. Later, in the *London Magazine* he began his *Table Talk* series, and later still his *Spirit of the Age* and *The Plain Speaker.* In all these essays there is a wealth of ideas, of reflection, and of reminiscence. penetrating criticism, and prose eloquence that defies description. Mr. Birrell has remarked that Hazlitt's very titles "make you lick your lips." *On Genius and Common Sense, On People with One Idea, On Living to Oneself, On the Indian Jugglers, On Thought and Action, On Going a Journey, On Familiar Style, On the Knowledge of Character, On the Fear of Death, The Conversation of Authors, Envy, The Look of a Gentleman, Reading Old Books, Application to Study, The Spirit of Obligations, The Pleasure of Hating, Respectable People,*

Depth and Superficiality, Personal Character—these are a few of them. To describe the varieties of writing, mood, and temper in these essays is impossible within the space here available. The worth-whileness of reading every page of Hazlitt's miscellaneous essays is admirably stated by Professor Saintsbury:

> To anyone who has made a little progress in criticism himself, to anyone who has either read for himself or is capable of reading for himself, of being guided by what is helpful and of neglecting what is not, there is no greater critic than Hazlitt in any language, . . . he is the critics' critic as Spenser is the poets' poet.

On Hazlitt's domestic affairs it is unnecessary to dwell in a short appreciation. He had not long married his second wife when she announced that she would not return to him. Thereafter he lived a somewhat solitary life, embittered greatly by the fall of Napoleon, whom he had worshipped, and of whom he wrote a "Life," which is now little read: history was not his forte. He was estranged for a time even from his gentlest friend, Charles Lamb, who, however, during their separation wrote of him: "I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing."

§ 3

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

Thomas De Quincey is one of the most original and, at the same time, one of the most irregular and, so to speak, *unmappable* writers in our literary history.

> He had [says Professor Saintsbury] a singular combination of exact scholarship with wide desultory reading; an entirely original faculty of narrative; a rare gift for exposition, either in summary of fact or concentration of argument; an intensely individual, though fitful, humour; and

a hardly matched—a certainly unsurpassed—command of gorgeous rhetorical style.

Thomas De Quincey, born in 1785, was the son of a Manchester merchant, who traced his family to the Normandy village named Quincey. He was sent to the Manchester Grammar School with a view to his winning a scholarship for Oxford. But his health went wrong, he was miserable, and finally he ran away, was chased by his relations, was more or less forgiven, and allowed to wander in Wales; then, under a new impulse of truancy he came to London, where he found lodgings in Soho and became a youthful outcast for a few years, during which he made strange friendships and formed the pathetic attachment to "Ann," of the Oxford Street pavements. Of her you may read in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* which, of all his voluminous writings, is the most wonderful.

Soon after his marriage, opium and love fought for the victory in De Quincey's life. A terrible chapter was opened. Is there anything in biography more pitiful than the picture he gives of his wife, lying by him and listening in distress to his dream-gabble until, as it grew less and less human, she would turn and cry, "Oh, what do you see, dear? what is it that you see?"

De Quincey has told us what he saw. "I seemed every night to descend, not metaphorically but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses." He knew a terrifying enlargement of space; it swelled to infinity. Time, too, expanded in a manner incommunicable by words: "I sometimes seemed to have lived 70 or 100 years in one night." Vast architectures rose before him, challenging the stars, and mysterious lakes swooned away into seas and oceans. But the seas and oceans, which might have brought peace, changed into a cosmos of human faces:

> Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power

> of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries—my agitation was infinite—my mind tossed—and surged with the ocean.

This is but one of his gorgeously terrible pictures. As an essayist, De Quincey has his permanent place in English literature by reason of such compositions as *Murder as One of the Fine Arts, The English Mail Coach, The Spanish Nun, Memorials of Grasmere,* and *Suspiria de Profundis.*

§ 4

LEIGH HUNT

Henry James Leigh Hunt was more aerial than Lamb, but emptier of real matter; more discursively critical, if possible, than Hazlitt, but less incisive and enduring. He was the butterfly in that garden. And he had a butterfly's love of the moment and of all that was gay and warm in life. He died at 41 High Street, Putney, in the same year as De Quincey—1859. In his last days he appeared to Nathaniel Hawthorne as "a beautiful and venerable old man." If he was beautiful, it was, doubtless, in large measure because he had loved things good and beautiful all his life. And he was a steadfast and even ingenious lover of his fellow-men. As Charles Lamb said, "He was only at his ease in the old arms of humanity."

Neither in prose nor poetry did Leigh Hunt achieve any real greatness, but in both he was almost always winning and felicitous. And he was one of the best *tasters* of literature of

his age. His most famous poem, undoubtedly, is "Abou Ben Adhem," with the well-remembered lines in which Abou, in his dream, addresses the recording angel:

> What writest thou?—The vision raised its head,
> And with a look made all of sweet accord,
> Answered: "The names of those who love the Lord."
> "And mine is one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
> Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
> But cheerly still; and said: "I pray thee then,
> Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."
> The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
> It came again with a great wakening light,
> And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
> And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

In his essays, printed mostly in the *Reflector, Indicator, New Tatler,* and the *London Journal,* Leigh Hunt was a poet writing amiable and sunny prose. Widely read and gifted with a good memory and great facility of expression, he was ready at any time to accept Swift's challenge and write charmingly on a broomstick. Nothing, indeed, was too trivial for his pen. He would write about the weather, about shop windows, about walking-sticks, about London fog, about his airiest likes and dislikes, about anything in the world—but always with the idea of refreshing the commonplace and making people fall in love with life. Charles Lamb, who loved him, portrayed the man and the writer in two lines:

> Wit, poet, proseman, partyman, translator,
> Hunt, thy best title yet is Indicator.

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XXIX

VICTORIAN POETS

VICTORIAN POETS

§ 1

ALFRED TENNYSON

WHAT is the truth about Tennyson? How has he stood the test of time? Pinnacled in his lifetime among the world's immortals, can we say that he has kept his pride of place? Is the splendour of his fame beginning to lack lustre? Some of our new critics seem to think so. Are they right?

Now, like every poet born, Tennyson possessed his points of weakness. "I am not sure," wrote Ruskin to him, "that I do not feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than I should like to feel them." That was to put his finger, very tenderly, upon the ailing spot. Tennyson was apt, as he himself was well aware:

> To add and alter many times
> Till all is ripe and rotten.

His ambition, also, "to take the hiss out of the language," by leaving out the letter *s* whenever possible, and filling all his lines with liquid *l*'s and *m*'s, helped to make the syllables too luscious—over-ripe. It is not to be denied that the effect of this, in its extreme, is to convey a sense of something rich but savourless, like a mouldy wedding-cake.

"Mariana"

But he was seldom in extremes. Even in his early volumes, where this habit is most marked, there were poems which, in

their own line, are not to be excelled in vivid beauty. One of these is *Mariana:*

With blackest moss the flower-plots
  Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
  That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
  Unlifted was the clinking latch;
  Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
  She only said, "My life is dreary,
    He cometh not," she said;
  She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
    I would that I were dead!"

About a stone-cast from the wall
  A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
  The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
  All silver-green with gnarled bark:
  For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
  She only said, "My life is dreary,
    He cometh not," she said;
  She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
    I would that I were dead!"

Here Tennyson is already doing in his verse what the Pre-Raphaelites did afterwards in painting.

Among his early lines, also, was that limpid drop of poetry, so sensitive, so deeply felt:

A spirit haunts the year's last hours.
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
    To himself he talks;
For at eventide, listening earnestly,
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
    In the walks;
    Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
Of the mouldering flowers:

Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

"The Lady of Shalott"

When, a little later, he wrote *The Lady of Shalott* he had already reached the summit of his powers—a summit on which he was to remain till he was nearly eighty:

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed,
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.

Verse more vivid never yet was written. There is something in it of the style of Virgil. Virgil and Tennyson, in fact, have many points in common. Both were great virtuosos in the art of words. Both were great creators of

Jewels five words long
That on the stretched forefinger of all Time
Sparkle for ever.

Indeed, the splendid lines which Tennyson addressed to Virgil apply with almost equal aptness to himself:

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word.

When we come to read *Œnone,* his first great poem in blank verse, the highly wrought Virgilian workmanship is still more evident. Here is the picture of Aphrodite when her beauty wins the golden apple from the hands of Paris:

Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"THE LADY OF SHALOTT," BY JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE

Tate Gallery, London.

This picture was shown at the Royal Academy in 1888, and it illustrates Tennyson's well-known poem. The treatment and colouring admirably convey the atmosphere of mystery surrounding the curse-stricken Lady of Shalott:

"... At the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

The three great masters in our language of narrative blank verse are Milton, Keats, and Tennyson. The opening of the *Morte d'Arthur* is a roll of very noble sound:

> So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
> Among the mountains by the winter sea;
> Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
> Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their Lord,
> King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
> The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
> Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
> And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
> A broken chancel with a broken cross,
> That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
> On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
> Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

"Idylls of the King"

In the later *Idylls of the King,* the "art and finish" of which Ruskin wrote became again too evident; and still more was this the case in *The Princess.* Yet the song "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white" is of extreme beauty; while "the small sweet idyll" was, in Tennyson's opinion, the finest piece of verse he ever wrote:

> Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
> What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
> In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
> But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
> To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
> To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
> And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
> For Love is of the valley, come thou down
> And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
> Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
> Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
> Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
> With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
> Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
> Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,

That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air:
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

That this is one of the most wrought and finished pieces of verse existing in our language can hardly be denied. Yet many a reader will prefer the opening of *The Lotus-Eaters:*

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.

In considering Tennyson's wide diversities of style we must not overlook his lighter work, *The Talking Oak, The Day-dream, The Brook,* and others of the kind. In this last poem the extreme skill in using words is like the magic of a conjuror:

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;

I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

As the years went on the style of Tennyson tended to put off its richness and to become more simple without losing power. If we compare *Locksley Hall* with *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, we are conscious of this difference at once. Compare these lines from the first poem:

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea,

with these from the later work:

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

Or again:

While I sheltered in this archway from a day of driving showers—
Peeped the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Or, lastly, perhaps the finest line he ever wrote:

Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

In the same style of strong simplicity are his latest poems, that greatest of all hymns, *Crossing the Bar*, and the exquisitely beautiful song *To Sleep*, from *The Foresters:*

To sleep! to sleep! the long bright day is done
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.
To sleep! To sleep!
Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the day,
Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.
To sleep! To sleep!
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past.
Sleep, happy soul! All life will sleep at last.
To sleep! To sleep!

Tennyson's Popular Appeal

Our mention of these poems brings us to another side of Tennyson which we have not yet considered—the side which appealed direct to the great public and which made him popular and rich. Such were the well-known lines:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

This, in its very beauty and simplicity, has gone straight into the hearts of millions.

Another poem of this kind is *Rizpah.* The description of the poor old woman, creeping to the gallows-foot at dead of night to feel if yet another bone had dropped from the chained skeleton which had been her son, is one to rend the very heart-

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"MARIANA," BY MILLAIS

This exquisitely coloured picture of Mariana, the subject of one of the most beautiful of Tennyson's poems, gives a vivid impression of the casement window through which Mariana was wont to watch at—

"the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower."

TENNYSON'S *Mariana*

ELAINE

From a drawing by Gustave Doré

'Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead
Steer'd by the dumb went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down
her did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.'

strings. To the class of popular appeal belong *The May Queen, The Two Voices, Lady Clare, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Dora,* and *The Miller's Daughter.* It is said that Queen Victoria was so delighted that the miller's daughter made her husband happy that she appointed Tennyson her next Poet Laureate.

In Memoriam, the great elegy on the death of Arthur Hallam, stands in a class apart. It contains the loveliest gems of poetry, but also much that helped to make the book a popular success among that vast majority of readers who not only have no taste for verse but who actively dislike it—thoughts on the living themes of life and love, of joys and hopes and sorrows, things that appeal to the soul and spirit of every child of man. It is with only half a smile that one recalls the fact that an enterprising publisher brought out a version of *In Memoriam* in prose; which is, to the lover of poetry, as if a miner should store up the rubble of his washing-pan and throw the gold away. It is poetry, and poetry alone that keeps, and will keep, *In Memoriam* alive among the world's great works of art—the poetry that fills it with such life-blood that we cannot bring ourselves to think that it will ever die.

There is another side to Tennyson, which is but little known. Who thinks of him as a satirist? Yet his lines on Bulwer are like a bunch of nettles. Bulwer had written *The New Timon* against Tennyson, a dull piece of satire, all venom and no sting. What was Tennyson's reply:

> We know him out of Shakespeare's art
> And those fine curses which he spoke;
> Old Timon with his noble heart,
> Which, strongly loathing, greatly broke.
>
> So died the Old; now comes the New;
> Regard him; a familiar face;
> I thought we knew him. What, it's you,
> The padded man, that wears the stays!

What profits now to understand
  The merits of a spotless shirt,
A dapper boot, a little hand,
  If half the little soul is dirt?

A Timon, you? Nay, nay, for shame!
  It looks too arrogant a jest—
The fierce old man—to take his name!
  You bandbox! Off, and let him rest!

Tennyson and Keats

And now, what are our last words concerning this great poet? We think it must be said that he holds the highest place among the followers of Keats. In graphic power he is equal with his master; in faculty of colour, not his equal, yet not much below him. He had, of course, what Keats had not, the power of appealing to the human heart to which we have referred. Such a poem as, for instance, *Rizpah,* is quite outside the range of Keats, or perhaps of any other poet. But, considered as an artist, pure and simple, not only have his pictures no pretence to match the mighty scale of the *Hyperion;* they want also the deep poetic charm in which the finest work of Keats is "rich to intoxication." Tennyson's Sleeping Beauty, for example, is as vivid, as a picture, as the sleeping Adonis of Keats; but the Princess sleeps beneath "a silk star-broidered coverlid," Adonis under a coverlid

Gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds.

The difference in the painting of these two coverlids very fairly marks the difference between the gift of Tennyson and the gift of Keats; a difference not of drawing, nor of brilliance, but of glamour—of poetic charm.

Tennyson's workmanship, besides, even at its best, is seldom quite free from the marks of labour. He achieves only by great care and pains what lesser poets achieve by instinct and at once.

Vividness of drawing, variety of subject—these, we think, are the two points in which Tennyson is unexcelled. In range, indeed, he has no rival. He is the only poet who can depict, with equal ease, all things in nature, from the highest to the lowest. He can set before us Venus, as she stood on Ida, her light foot shining rosy-white among the violets, the glowing sunlights floating on her rounded form between the shadows of the vine-branches, her rosy, slender fingers drawing back,

> From her warm brows and bosom, her deep hair
> Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
> And shoulder.

Or he can work out such a study as:

> a pasty, costly-made,
> Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,
> Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
> Imbedded and injellied.

It is not every poet—certainly it is neither Wordsworth, Keats, nor Shelley—who can sit down to paint, with equal felicity, and seemingly with equal gusto, the Goddess of Love and a game-pie.

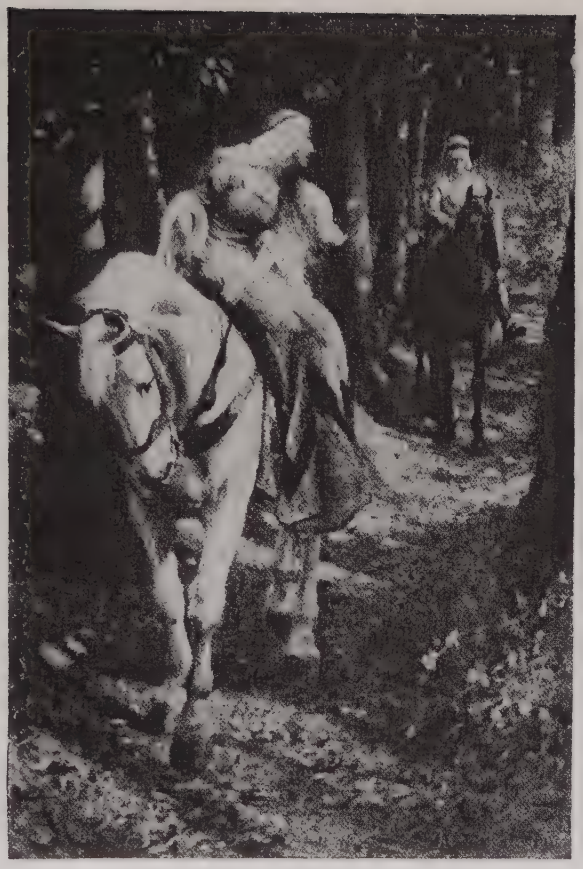
Such a study makes us marvel at the workmanship; but such is not the kind on which we love to dwell. And Tennyson's best pictures ought not, in truth, to be compared with those of any other poet. Their excellence is not of the same kind. Yet what a gallery is his!—how many and how beautiful its scenes! There is the lonely garden on which Mariana looked out from the windows of the moated grange, the flower-pots black with moss, the peaches falling from their rusty nails, the black sluice choked with water-weed, the solitary poplar shaking its melancholy leaves. There is the vale of Ida, the vine-roofed, crocus-paven bower, where Paris is giving the apple to Venus, and Œnone is

peeping from her cave behind the whispering pine. There are the arras of the Palace of Art, inwrought with scenes like life; St. Cecilia sleeping near her organ; Ganymede flying up to heaven among the eagle's feathers; Europa, in her floating mantle, carried by the bull; King Arthur lying wounded in Avilion, among the weeping queens. There is Sir Bedivere, flinging the sparkling sword into the enchanted lake; and Vivien at the feet of Merlin; and Elaine, like a white lily, on her black, slow-gliding barge. And there, too, is many such a piece of painting, as the gorgeous lines which call up before the eye the scene of Camelot, the rich dim city, on the day of the departure of the knights; the pageant passing in the streets, the tottering roofs alive with gazers, the men and boys astride of the carved swans and griffins, crying God-speed at every corner, the grotesque dragons clinging to the walls and bearing on their backs the long rich galleries, the lines of lovely ladies, gazing, weeping, showering down an endless rain of flowers.

All these things are things of beauty. Surely they will be a joy for ever.

Tennyson was born in 1809 at Somersby in Lincolnshire, at his father's rectory, and was sent to Cambridge, where he won the Chancellor's Medal for a prize poem on the unpoetical subject "Timbuctoo."

His first book of poems was entitled *By Two Brothers,* written in conjunction with his brother Charles. In 1830 he published *Poems, chiefly Lyrical,* and a further volume, *Poems,* in 1833. These were revised and collected with additions in the two volumes of 1842. *The Princess* appeared in 1847, and was followed by *In Memoriam* in 1850, in which year he became Poet Laureate at the death of Wordsworth. His subsequent volumes comprised *Maud and other Poems* (1855), *The Idylls of the King* (1858), *Enoch Arden* (1864), works which were followed by *Harold, Becket,* and other dramas. Tennyson was created a peer in 1884, and died October 6, 1892.



"ENID AND GERAINT"

After a painting by Rowland Wheelwright.

A scene from Tennyson's story of Geraint and Enid in the *Idylls of the King*.

Geraint, fearful lest Enid should be attracted more by the glitter of the Court of King Arthur than by love for himself forces her on their journey to ride ahead alone and in silence, clad only in an old and faded dress of silk.

He feels that if her love will survive such cavalier treatment he can rest secure:

> a rock in ebbs and flows
> Fix't on her faith."

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Leeds.*

LADY GODIVA, BY E. BLAIR LEIGHTON

Leeds Art Gallery.

The legend of Lady Godiva, wife of the eleventh-century Leofric of Mercia, is well known. Tennyson immortalised Godiva in his poem of that name.

Here the Lady Godiva, having pleaded with her lord for the repeal of a harsh levy on the people of Coventry, hears with consternation the unworthy condition by the fulfilment of which Leofric promises to yield to her entreaty.

Stunned yet resolute, she is left alone awhile

> "The passions of her mind
> As winds from all the compass shift and blow,
> Made war upon each other for an hour
> Till pity won."

§ 2

ROBERT BROWNING

By Sir A. Quiller-Couch

Early Disappointments

Born (1812) in easier circumstances than Tennyson, or, let us say, in a more affluent home, Robert Browning had a far harder fight for fame, and this not only because he missed a circle of applausive friends to hail his advent, but yet more because his upbringing secluded him somewhat from youths of his own age and drove him inward upon his own private standards and that self-applause which is the worse side of self-reliance. His grandfather was a Robert Browning, clerk in the Bank of England; his father a Robert Browning, also clerk in the Bank of England. Robert the first liked his calling and prospered in it; Robert the second prospered in it fairly, but liked it not, having been driven to it under parental durance after throwing up a post in the West Indies through disgust of slave labour—resigning, too, some young artistic ambitions. Robert the third's education ran on lines not very dissimilar from Ruskin's, his great contemporary. His father intended him for the Bar, agreeing with the mother that a clerkship in the Bank was not good enough for their boy, whose formal education would seem to have been limited to a dame's school, a private academy at Peckham, and a short course in Greek at University College, London. When he decided to be a poet instead of a barrister, his parents did not obstinately oppose the choice. His father financed his first poems, without pecuniary recompense; and the good lad (we are told) read through the whole of Johnson's Dictionary as preparative for a literary life. *Pauline* (dated October 22, 1830), an essay in the analytic-dramatic, a form that to the end attracted him, must be judged now as a marvellous production from the pen of a boy; but, as we have said, English criticism had reached its worst and

the critics would have none of this marvel—which D. G. Rossetti, alighting on it some years later in the Reading Room of the British Museum and not knowing its author, transcribed for himself out of pure enthusiasm. *Paracelsus*—a greater wonder, holding for some the germ of all that was eventually best in Browning (with the germ, too, of something even greater that he might have been), earned neither fame nor money, though it won him acquaintance with many distinguished men of letters—Landor, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Dickens, and with Macready, at whose invitation he wrote the tragedy of *Strafford,* performed at Covent Garden on May 1, 1837. It ran but a few nights. As if to seal his unpopularity *Sordello* followed, and few denied that to extract enjoyment, or even a continuity of meaning, from *Sordello* would try the patience of a saint. "I blame no one," said Browning of its failure, "least of all myself, who did my best then and since." Which assertion we may match, if we choose, against Ben Jonson's:

> By God, 'tis good; and, if you like it, you may.

But poets who talk in this fashion are sore and soured; and they are usually both because they are egotistical, not because they are innovators; because they demand over-much of the reader's attention without being at the pains to attract him—forgetting him, in short, and thereby neglecting the first obligation of good manners. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, were innovators; but at least they appealed to their public, and persuasively. Browning could not see that he had this obligation; and a man, if he have strength enough—as he had—can no doubt do without it in the long run. But meantime he was sore and indignant, with an indignation which (for in private life he was more expansive than Tennyson, and given to wearing his heart on his sleeve), from time to time, even after fame had found him, he inevitably remembered:

British Public, ye who like me not
(God love you!)—whom I yet have laboured for
Perchance more careful whoso runs may read
Than erst when all it seemed, could read who ran.

But at this time (1837-41), in spite of discouragement, he still thought of himself as destined to succeed in drama ("Robert Browning—you writer of plays"), and accumulated those dramas in his desk—*King Victor and King Charles, The Return of the Druses,* and that playlet of sheer poetry, *Pippa Passes.* It was indeed, by a lyrical conversion of his dramatic instinct, or by a lyrical application of it—forboded in *Pippa*—that at length he came to his own. It so happened that Moxon, the publisher, was issuing some cheap reprints of the old dramatists; and it came into Moxon's head that a number of Browning's poems might be set up in the same type and put on the market. Browning gladly agreed; and thus was started the truly epoch-making little series, *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841-6). It started with *Pippa.* Some few years later, on a soil prepared by the Pre-Raphaelites, this charmingly original piece would of a certainty have been welcomed, as Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* was welcomed. But in 1841 critics and public remained unmoved. *Sordello* still cast its shadow ahead, with that deadliest of frosts which can clog any writer—the chill of his readers' expectancy. But in No. 3, *Dramatic Lyrics,* and No. 7, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics,* the true Browning found himself. He did not at once abandon his ambition of writing for the stage, and the series wound up, in 1846, with two plays, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy.* These, like their predecessors, lacked "movement." But about the dramatic and the lyrical sense and their interfusion in *Dramatic Lyrics* there could be no question: and this interfusion made them unlike almost anything previously written in English verse. For to group these conveniently with his later efforts, in this *genre* of his discovery, *Dramatic Personæ* (1864), *Dramatic Idylls* (1879-80), not only does he seize upon dramatic "situations" from the

simplest to the uncanniest, with the skill and resource of a conjuror; he fits them to lyrical measures which, startling at first, and sometimes at first forbidding, come to be felt by us as inevitably right—each separate metre the only possible one for its own curious theme. Who but Browning, for example, could have found *A Grammarian's Funeral* for a subject; or, having found it, could have found the queer metre (with the queer rhymes)?

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
Borne on our shoulders. . . .
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak! the multitude below
Live, for they can, there.
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place. . . .

Who but Browning could have found such themes, and fitted such haunting metres to them, as *The Laboratory, The Lost Mistress, Up at a Villa, The Last Ride Together, A Toccata of Galluppi's, Love Among the Ruins.*—

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since,
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

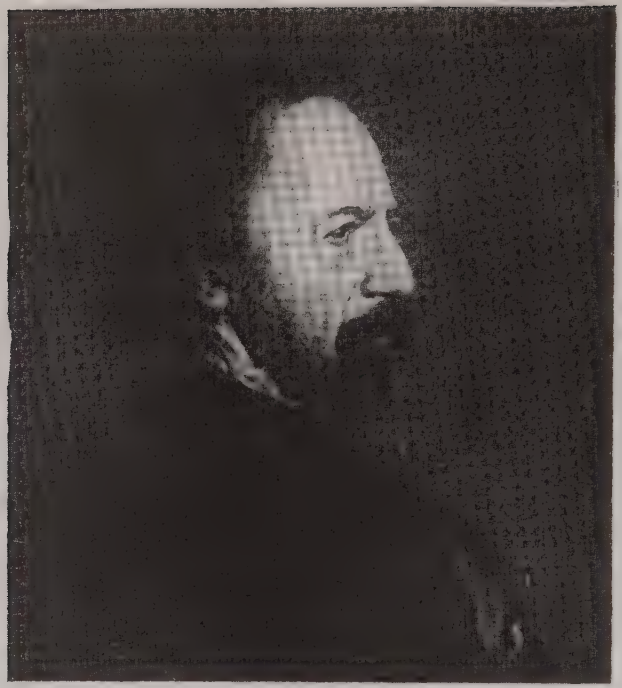
Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Leeds*

"THE TEMPTATION OF SIR PERCIVAL," BY ARTHUR HACKER, A.R.A.

Leeds Art Gallery.

"A sober man is Percival and pure;
. . . one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;
And that he sinn'd, is not believable."

TENNYSON'S *Idylls of the King*.



LORD TENNYSON

After a portrait by Joseph Simpson

The most popular if not the most inspired of the Victorian poets

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

"THE ROAD TO CAMELOT," BY G. H. BOUGHTON, R.A.

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

This charming picture illustrates Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*. Here we have the road along which

"Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad
Or long-haired page in crimson clad
Goes by to tower'd Camelot."

TENNYSON'S *Lady of Shalott*

Above all, who but Browning could have matched imagination with metre as he matched them in that brief model and masterpiece, *Saul?* It is seen, as David sees it; felt awfully, as David feels it:

> And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered—and sparkles 'gan dart
> From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—
> All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.

And it sings itself inspiredly as David must have sung it, through hard effort and rapture down to its close. Among the very few nineteenth-century poems which attain to being "of its sort," one perhaps, and one only, can sincerely challenge it—Victor Hugo's *Boöz Endormi:*

> Tout reposait dans Ur et dans Jerimadeth

and to some of us even the vigil of Ruth in that exquisite piece must surrender to the home-running of David through the woods and wild brakes in the humid daybreak by murmuring witnessing waters.

Elizabeth Barrett

There reached Browning, late in 1844, a volume of verse by a Miss Elizabeth Barrett, an invalid cousin of his friend John Kenyon. He admired it, especially a piece entitled *Lady Geraldine's Courtship,* and expressed his admiration in a letter. An interview followed, for Miss Barrett, herself an experimenter in verse, had been seized upon in imagination by *Bells and Pomegranates,* and of that interview sprang a passionate, lifelong affection. The subsequent story was romantic enough, but very simple. A grim father forbade the match; the lovers eloped secretly and by stratagem, were married clandestinely on September 12, 1846, and a week later were on their way to Paris. From Paris they went on to Italy; and lived at Pisa and at

Florence until 1851; and, with brief returns to England and Paris, made Italy their home until Mrs. Browning's death in 1861. They wrote much; and each achieved a very long poem in blank verse. Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh* in nine books was given to the world in 1856; her husband's prodigious *The Ring and the Book* made its appearance in four long instalments, 1868-9. The pair of them had been innovators in rhyme, and just here it must be admitted that they went astray. Browning could rhyme with anything, and too often spoilt poetry by this confident trick; whereas Mrs. Browning too often spoilt poetry by a pedantic indifference in matching sounds. She is at her best in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and *Casa Guidi Windows*, in both of which a passion is expressed—passionate love and a passion for Italian liberty. *Aurora Leigh*, one suspects, has few steady readers nowadays. But *The Ring and the Book*, with its turnings and returnings, its apparent garrulities and prolixities (all seen in review to be a part of Browning's determination to express the last drop of juice out of the chosen tragedy) must continue to be studied as one of the world's literary wonders. Browning's later work—*Balaustion's Adventure* (cruelly labelled by D. G. Rossetti *Exhaustion's Imposture*), *Prince Hohenstich-Schwangen* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Nightcap Country* (1873), *The Inn Album* (1875), *Pacchiarotto* (1876), the *Agamemnon* translation (1877), *La Saisiaz* and *Two Poets of Croisic* (1878)—exhibits a genius in decline or, it may be that, having been so long and unjustly dispraised for his merits, and having at length found a public which acclaimed him "Master" for his defects, he yielded to the temptation and, in place of poetry, poured out volume upon volume of "thinking cloud" in metrical form. It is curious to note that in their later years Tennyson, the popular idol, turned to be a haughty and mystic recluse, while Browning, the uncompromising, expands into a genial man of society and diner-out. It should be added that his greatness gave itself no airs; that he continued to write

indefatigably; and that in his last years, when his fame had become national, he reasserted his pristine power now and again—especially in *Dramatic Idylls* (1879-80), and *Asolando,* published in 1889 on the day of his death. Intervening volumes are *Jocoseria* (1833), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), *Parleyings with Certain People* (1887). He was accorded a public funeral and lies near his great rival in the Abbey.

A Manly Poet

Browning's last lines (the Epilogue to *Asolando,* comparable with Tennyson's famous *Crossing the Bar* as a noble utterance closing a long and noble life), contain a not exorbitant apologia for:

> One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break,
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

He was, before all things, a manly poet; hopeful and helpful, with no languors of sentimentality; and, as his wife said truly of *Pomegranates,* though the rind be hard the fruit is ripe and red to the core.

The following are some of Browning's best-known poems:

THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING

> The year's at the spring,
> The day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hill-side's dew-pearled;
> The lark's on the wing;
> The snail's on the thorn:
> God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world!

HOME THOUGHTS

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower.
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

. . . . . .

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while,
My heart seemed full as it could hold!
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet, cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

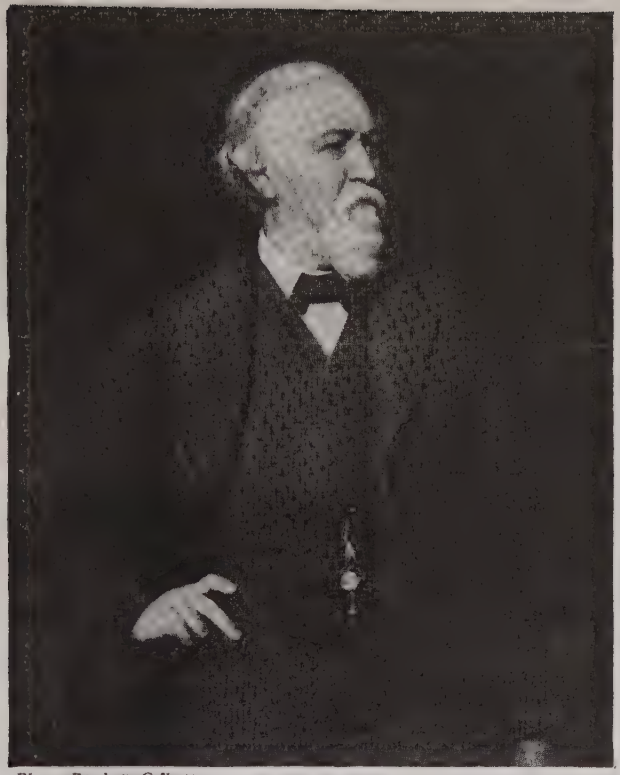


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ROBERT BROWNING, BY RUDOLPH LEHMANN

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, FROM THE PAINTING BY G. F. WATTS, R.A. PAINTED 1865

The last of the Victorian poets.

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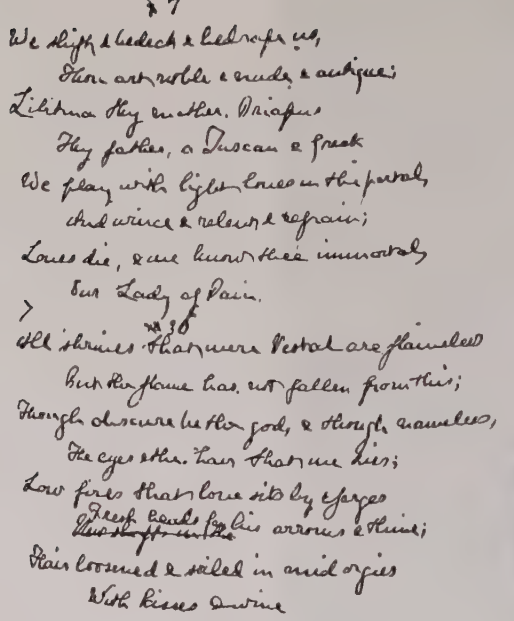
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The poet as a child



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PART OF MS. OF SWINBURNE'S "DOLORES"

IN MEMORIAM

"Man dies: nor is there hope in dust."

TENNYSON.

From a drawing by A. Garth Jones.

SUMMUM BONUM

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and how far above them—
Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and prickling whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one, who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

. . . . . .

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

. . . . . .

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,

Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

§ 3

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

"Swinburne," said Tennyson, "is a reed through which all things blow into music." "He simply sweeps me away before him," said Ruskin, "as a torrent does a pebble." These sayings perfectly express the double gift of Swinburne—the strange new tunes of his rhythms and the torrent-sweep of his verse.

The verse was unique and the man was unique. He was born in 1837, his father being Admiral Swinburne, and his mother a daughter of Lord Ashburnham—neither of them persons at all peculiar or bizarre. But the boy was simply an astounding freak. Imagine a Lilliputian body, with very sloping shoulders, a neck as slender as a lily-stalk, a giant's head, with a crest of orange-fiery hair "like some strange bird of Paradise," eyes and lips for ever twitching in a kind of spasm, a tiny body that, at the least excitement, shivered like a leaf in tempest, and a voice that shrilled upward like a piccolo. At Eton and Oxford, where he picked up Greek and Latin as if by intuition, he began to compose verses. As he himself said afterwards:

Some sang to me dreaming in class-time,
  And truant in hand as in tongue,
For the youngest are born of boy's pastime,
  The eldest are young.

"Rosamond"

But it was not till 1861 that he put forth his first volume, two little dramas, *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond,* respecting which there is an anecdote that throws a strange and striking light upon the singularities of his character. He was staying with William Stubbs, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, and upon the invitation of his host and hostess he read aloud a play, probably *Rosamond.*

> Stubbs, Mr. Edmund Gosse tells us, "was very much impressed with the merits of the piece, but . . . felt obliged to say that he thought the tone of the amatory passages somewhat objectionable." The result was "a long silent stare, followed by a scream which rent the vicarage, and by the bolt upstairs of the outraged poet, hugging his MS. to his bosom. Presently gentle Mrs. Stubbs stole upstairs, and, tapping at Swinburne's door, entreated him to come down to supper. There was no reply, but an extraordinary noise within of tearing, and a strange glare through the keyhole. All night, at intervals, there were noises in the poet's room, and the Stubbses were distracted. In the morning Swinburne appeared extremely late, and deathly pale. Stubbs, by this time very wretched, hastened to say how sorry he was that he had so hastily condemned the drama, and how much he hoped that Swinburne had not been discouraged by his criticism. The poet replied, 'I lighted a fire in the empty grate, and I burned every page of my manuscript.' Stubbs was horrified. 'But it does not matter; I sat up all night and wrote it through again from memory.' "

Such was the strange wild being from whom there was to come a strange wild poetry, that yet was charged with the intensest beauty.

In 1865 appeared a play on the Greek model, *Atalanta in Calydon,* a perfect masterpiece of splendid verse. It tells the

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

"If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold.

From *A Face*, by Robert Browning

From a painting by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale.

Photo: Ritchie's Collection.

D. G. ROSSETTI, 1855, DRAWN BY HIMSELF

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was both poet and painter, one of the great group of Victorian Pre-Raphaelites

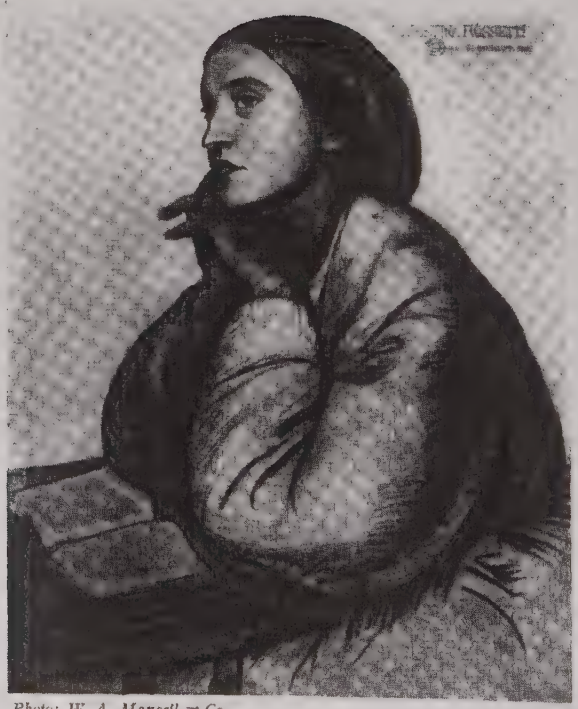

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

MISS CHRISTINA ROSSETTI BY D. G. ROSSETTI

The gifted sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and one of the two most distinguished of Victorian women poets

story of the hunting of the wild boar which Diana sent to Calydon to prey upon the herds. The maiden-huntress, Atalanta, was the first to wound it, and it was slain at last by the young hero Meleager, who gave the hide and tusks to Atalanta, with whom he was in love, to the jealousy of all the other hunters. They strove to wrest them from her, but the hero fought and beat them, though in the end it cost his life.

The first chorus was alone enough to show that a new poet had arisen:

> When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
> The mother of months in meadow or plain
> Fills the shadows and windy places
> With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
> And the brown bright nightingale amorous
> Is half assuaged for Itylus,
> For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
> The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
> Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
> The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
> From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
> And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire
> And the oat is heard above the lyre,
> And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
> The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

In 1866 appeared *Poems and Ballads,* a book which, if he had written nothing else, would have set and kept his fame upon the highest peaks of glory. It was received with a scream of hysterics on the grounds of immorality. As Swinburne himself puts it, "the water began to seethe and rage in the British tea-kettle." The publisher withdrew the book from circulation and it was reissued by another. The hubbub was absurd, even for those days, and is almost unintelligible in ours, when elderly ladies are wont to write textbooks of erotics for the edification of young girls.

One of the poems sought out for opprobrium was *Dolores.* Dolores is not one woman in particular, but the embodying of all the women in the world who use their beauty to entice their lovers to their doom—vampire-women, siren-women, who pick white the bones of men. So the moral—if one must wring a moral out of a work of art—seems to be that all such sirens and their dupes come alike to a bad end.

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel
  Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel
  Red mouth like a venomous flower;
When these are gone by with their glories,
  What shall rest of thee then, what remain,
O mystic and sombre Dolores,
  Our Lady of Pain?

"The Triumph of Time"

The Triumph of Time, a poem based upon a real experience of his own, may be called the greatest love-lament existing. Never was a wail so sweet and piercing, so full of the ache and yearning for a woman loved in vain. Never rang in the ears of men such a splendour of despair:

I shall never be friends again with roses;
  I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
  As a wave of the sea turned back by song.
There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;
  I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
  The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
  The music burning at heart like wine,

An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
These things are over, and no more mine.

It is interesting to know that the man who wrote these stanzas, with their celestial music, possessed no ear whatever for the melody of sound.

It has been said of Swinburne that he was too fond of playing with the loud pedal down. But no man could awake soft pedalled melodies more sweet and stilled. Such, for example, are these stanzas from *The Garden of Proserpine:*

Here, where the world is quiet;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

. . . . . .

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes,
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

. . . . . .

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
  Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
  Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
  In an eternal night.

"Poems and Ballads"

Poems and Ballads was dedicated to Burne-Jones, the painter—and the dedication is a piece of verse which perhaps excels in beauty any other poem in the volume. In the lines that follow he is speaking of his songs:

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,
  Is there hearing for songs that recede,
Tunes touched from a harp with man's fingers
  Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?
Is there place in the land of your labour,
  Is there room in your world of delight,
Where change has not sorrow for neighbour
  And day has not night?

In a land of clear colours and stories,
  In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories
  And a murmur of musical flowers;
In woods where the spring half uncovers
  The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
  For these is there place?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious
  And lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious
  Warm heaven of her imminent wings,
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,
  For the love of old loves and lost times;
And receive in your palace of painting
  This revel of rhymes.

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"Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there."

From *Home Thoughts from Abroad* by Robert Browning.

From a painting by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale

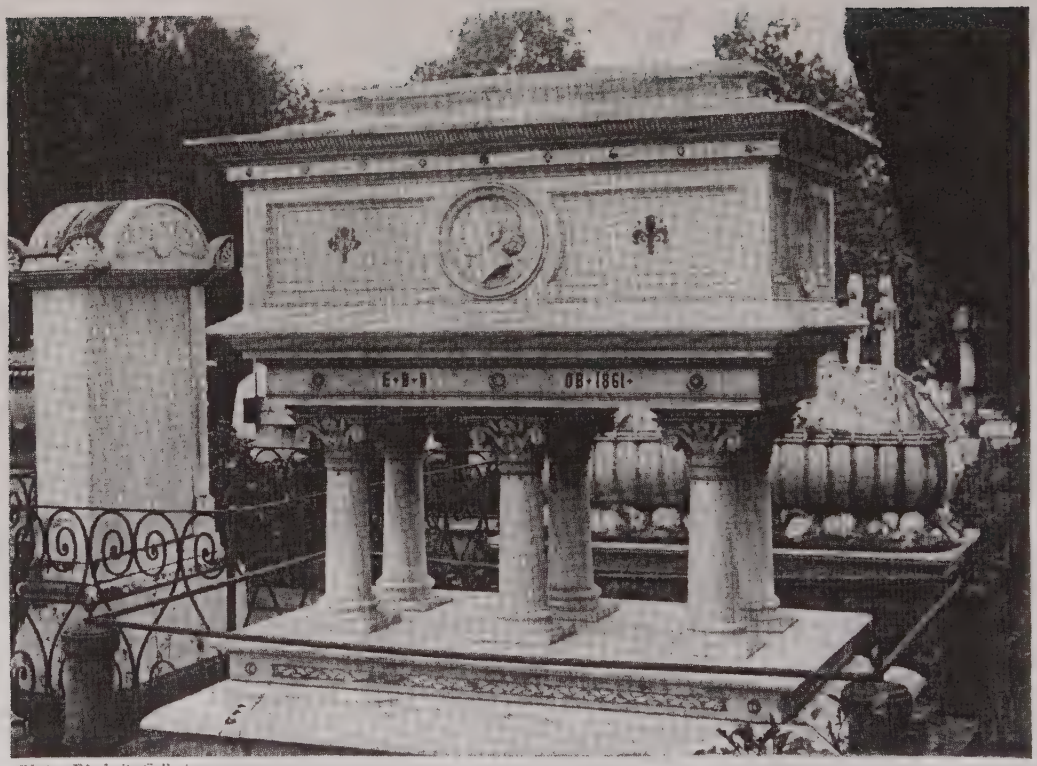


Photo: Rischgitz Collection

TOMB OF MRS. ELIZABETH BROWNING IN THE CEMETERY AT FLORENCE, FROM THE DESIGN BY LORD LEIGHTON

When quite a young girl Elizabeth Barrett received an injury to the spine from the effects of which she never fully recovered. Settling in Florence after her marriage in 1846 to Robert Browning her health showed a marked improvement, but fourteen years later she began to lose strength and in the year of 1861 death put a period to her brief but happy married life.

Swinburne also wrote a kind of gay love-lyric which is a new thing in the world of art—such as *A Match*. It is a song that might have been sung by Ariel:

If love were what the rose is,
  And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
  Green pleasure or grey grief;
If love were what the rose is,
  And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
  And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
  That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are,
  And love were like the tune.

. . . . . .

If you were April's lady,
  And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
  And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
  And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
  And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
  And find his mouth a rein;
If you were the queen of pleasure,
  And I were the king of pain.

Love at Sea is an example of the same kind of work, but it is also of great interest for the skill with which it wins the very spirit of a poem by Théophile Gautier, and gives it a new body of beauty in English verse:

We are in love's land to-day;
  Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
  Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's hand to-day;
  Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
  And joys that were;
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
  And love knows where.
    We are in love's hand to-day—

. . . . . .

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
  Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
  Or flowers of foam?
    We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
  One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
  No maiden land.

His next great book was *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871). These poems are almost all loud-pedal music—but such music! Let us take two stanzas from the *Prelude:*

Play then and sing; we too have played,
We likewise, in that subtle shade.
  We too have twisted through our hair
  Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,
And heard what mirth the Mænads made,
  Till the wind blew our garlands bare
And left their roses disarrayed,
  And smote the summer with strange air,
And disengirdled and discrowned
The limbs and locks that vine-wreaths bound.

We too have tracked by star-proof trees
The tempest of the Thyiades
  Scare the loud night on hills that hid
  The blood-feasts of the Bassarid,
Heard their song's iron cadences
  Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,
Outroar the lion-throated seas,
  Outchide the north-wind if it chid,
And hush the torrent-tongued ravines
With thunders of their tambourines.

Here, again, are a few stanzas from the tremendous *Marching Song*—the song of the leaders in the march of the progress of mankind:

We mix from many lands.
  We march for very far;
In hearts and lips and hands
  Our staffs and weapons are;
The light we walk in darkens sun and moon and star.

It doth not flame and wane
  With years and spheres that roll,
Storm cannot shake nor stain
  The strength that makes it whole,
The fire that moulds and moves it of the sovereign soul.

. . . . . .

We strive with time at wrestling
  Till time be on our side

And hope, our plumeless nestling,
A full-fledged eaglet ride
Down the loud length of storm its windward wings divide.

. . . . . .

O people, O perfect nation,
O England that shall be,
How long till thou take station?
How long till thralls live free?
How long till all thy soul be one with all thy sea?

With us the winds and fountains
And lightnings live in tune;
The morning-coloured mountains
That burn into the noon,
The mist's mild veil on valleys muffled from the moon:

The thunder-darkened highlands
And lowlands hot with fruit,
Sea-bays and shoals and islands,
And cliffs that foil man's foot,
And all the flower of large-limbed life and all the root:

The clangour of sea-eagles
That teach the morning mirth
With baying of heaven's beagles
That seek their prey on earth,
By sounding strait and channel, gulf and reach and firth.

With us the fields and rivers,
The grass that summer thrills,
The haze where morning quivers,
The peace at heart of hills,
The sense that kindles nature, and the soul that fills.

Rise, for the dawn is risen;
Come, and be all souls fed;
From field and street and prison
Come, for the feast is spread;
Live, for truth is living; wake, for night is dead.

But there is soft-pedal music in it, too—such as *Siena,* one of the loveliest things that he or any other poet ever wrote. We have only space to give the opening, but the whole poem should be

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co. *Reproduced by permission of the Corporation of Liverpool.*

"LOVE'S BAUBLES," BY BYAM SHAW

This spirited picture illustrates Rossetti's love sonnet, *Love's Baubles*, from *The House of Life*.

"I stood where Love in brimming armfuls bore
Slight wanton flowers and foolish toys of fruit:
And round him ladies thronged in warm pursuit."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

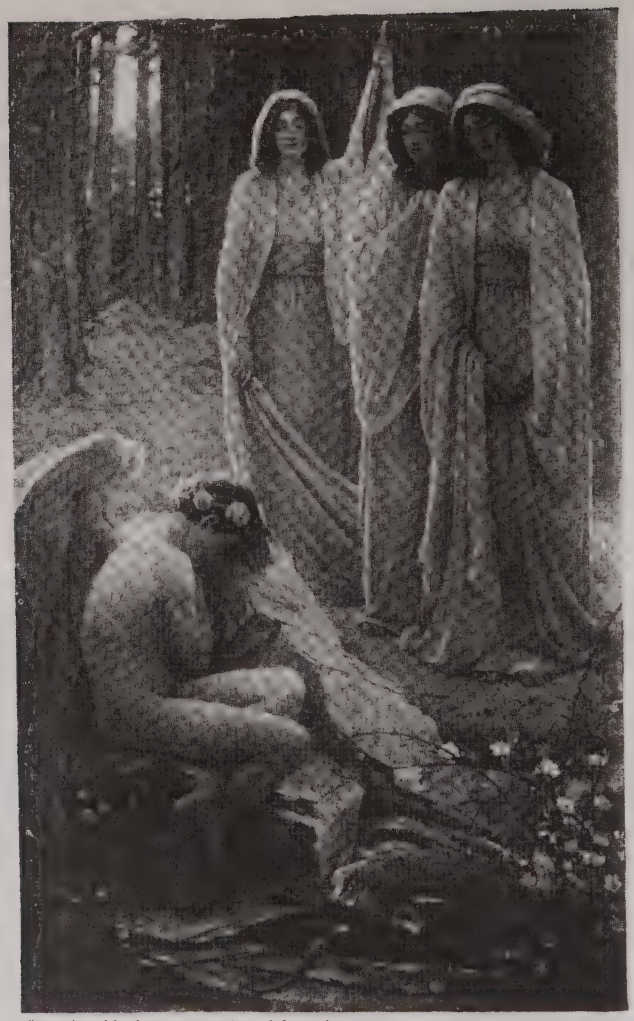
Photo: T. & R. Annan.

"THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN," BY CHRISTIE

National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

This charming picture, illustrating Robert Browning's well-known poem, shows the enraptured children of Hamelin Town following the sound of the magic pipe. Happily and gaily they trip along, lured by the music and the piper's promise of a land where

"Honeybees had lost their stings
And horses were born with eagle's wings."



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"SONG"

"And Fear and Sorrow and Scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn
Till the night was overworn
And the world was merry with morn."

A. C. SWINBURNE

From the painting by Alfred Ward

read—absorbed. Its possession is, as it were, to hang a splendid picture in the gallery of the mind or to fill the soul with the remembrance of a glorious symphony:

> Inside this northern summer's fold
> The fields are full of naked gold,
> Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves;
> The green veiled air is full of doves;
> Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let
> Light on the small warm grasses wet
> Fall in short broken kisses sweet,
> And break again like waves that beat
> Round the sun's feet.

The second series of *Poems and Ballads* appeared in 1878. The number of great poems is fewer than in the earlier volume, nor does any single poem rise quite to the same level, except *The Forsaken Garden,* the supreme elegy on the death of Baudelaire, and the *Ballad of Dreamland.* The last, which is exquisitely beautiful, we will quote in full:

> I hid my heart in a nest of roses,
> Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
> In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
> Under the roses I hid my heart.
> Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
> When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
> What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
> Only the song of a secret bird.
>
> Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
> And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
> Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
> And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
> Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
> Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
> What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
> Only the song of a secret bird.
>
> The green land's name that a charm encloses,
> It never was writ in the traveller's chart,

And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart.
Only the song of a secret bird.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

The Weakening of the Spell

After this date he put forth a long, long series of poetic works, some of which, like *Songs of the Springtides* (1880) and *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), as well as his long dramas, contain, by bursts and gleams, much splendid verse. But on these we shall not dwell. Little by little, there steals into the reader's mind a sense of something failing. The rush and flow of words is always there; it is the old spell that is dying. Like the beauty of Tennyson's "Maud," the beauty of the verse becomes more and more "splendidly null." The keenest lovers of his music, who rank him, with Milton, Keats, and Shelley, among the supreme masters of the poetry of England, seldom or never read these later works at all. *These* are not the things that make the very hearts within us "ache with the pulse of his remembered song." He affects us like a great piano-player who has lost his touch. He strikes the keys with all his early vigour, but the charm is there no longer. The music lacks the magic and the thrill.

Swinburne, at his best and greatest, produced two kinds of poems, quite unlike each other, and both unexcelled. In the first, the frenzied rush of rhythm, in the phrase of Ruskin, sweeps the soul away before it, as in *Mater Triumphalis* and the *Hymn to Man*. In the second kind, the music, lulled and mesmerising as a charmer's tune, bears the spirit to a land enchanted, a land of strange unearthly blossoms, the wonder-world of all the fair

phantasmal women who are the daughters of sweet dreams. There are the things of vision which in *Before the Mirror,* the white girl watches in her magic glass:

There glowing ghosts of flowers
  Draw down, draw nigh;
And wings of swift spent hours
  Take flight and fly;
She sees by formless gleams,
She hears across cold streams,
  Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,
  With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
  She knew not why,
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
  The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

The following are the chief volumes of Swinburne's poems (but the reader will find most of his finest work in *Selections from A. S. Swinburne,* edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise): *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond* (1861), *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), *Poems and Ballads* (1866), *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), *Bothwell* (1874), *Songs of Two Nations* (1876), *Erechtheus* (1876), *Poems and Ballads* (second series) (1878), *Songs of the Springtides* (1880) *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *Locrine* (1887).

During the last thirty years of his life Swinburne lived with his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton at "The Pines," Putney, where he died in 1909. He was buried at Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight.

§ 4

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Rossetti was born in 1828 in Charlotte Street, London, his father, himself a poet, being Professor of Italian at King's College. The future poet-painter was, by birth, one-quarter English

and the rest Italian—a combination easy to be traced alike in his appearance and in his cast of character—in his warm dark complexion, with large grey-bluish eyes, in his look of fiery will and purpose, in his sudden-changing whims of temper, now gay with laughter like a boy's, now stirred to stormy anger, yet capable of passion strong as death—a very child of Southern blood, the blood that runs like flame.

Miss Siddal

Even as a boy he was a poet and a painter. At fifteen he was a student at the Royal Academy schools. But academic art was a thing abhorrent to him. Indeed, he never mastered the strict rules of drawing or perspective. His passion and his gift were all for colour. So great was his precocity that before he reached the age of twenty-one he had set up in a studio of his own, had painted pictures which, like the *Girlhood of the Virgin,* were, of their kind, without a rival, and had written poems, like *The Blessed Damozel* and *My Sister's Sleep,* which were to hold their place among his best. At the same early age he had founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose aim it was to paint pictures in minutest detail, as in nature. Among the Brothers were Millais, Holman Hunt, Woolner, and Deverell. It happened that the last-named painter, going with his mother into a milliner's in Oxford Street, saw among a number of young girls at work, one with a glorious mass of reddish hair—the favourite colour of the Brotherhood. Deverell, through his mother, asked the girl if she would sit to him. She consented to become his model, and afterwards Rossetti's also. Her name was Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, and she became Rossetti's wife. Every reader has seen her lovely face look out upon him from her husband's paintings—as Mariana in the moated grange; as St. Cecilia at the organ; as one of the weeping queens whose black barge came across the enchanted lake to bear away the dying King; above all as *Beata Beatrix,* the picture which he himself described—

From "The Springtide of Life," by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Illustrations by Arthur Rackham London: Wm. Heinemann. Ltd.

A CHILD'S FUTURE

"What will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

From "The Springtide of Life," by Algernon Charles Swinburne Illustrated by Arthur Rackham. London Wm Heinemann, Ltd.

"Where children are not, heaven is not. and heaven if they come not again shall be never
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of heaven and its promise for ever"

From *Sunrise*, by A. C Swinburne

"while the bird, a messenger of Death, drops the poppy between her hands, she, through her shut lids, is conscious of a new world."

Two years after the marriage, his wife died. Standing beside her coffin with the manuscript of his first book of poems in his hands, he declared that it was for her they had been written, and that they should be buried with her. And they went with her to the grave.

Rossetti now took a house at Chelsea, where, with brief intervals, his after life was passed. The house was, like its owner, strange, romantic, and bizarre—crammed with old mirrors, lutes, mandolines, and citherns, bronze and ivory idols, lacquered screens of birds and blossoms, blue jars with peacocks' feathers, coins, daggers, dragons, crystals, fans. The daylight, even at the height of summer, was shut out by heavy velvet curtains. Strange creatures had their dwelling in the garden—a pair of armadillos, a kangaroo that one day murdered its own mother, a deer that kept itself from boredom by stamping out the feathers of the peacock's tail, a raccoon that "looked like the devil" when it snarled, and which once escaped into the house and chewed a pile of manuscript to rags.

Some years after his wife's death Rossetti was persuaded that the poems buried with her ought not to be allowed to perish. In truth he was easily persuaded, for he never ceased to regret that he had given his consent. The coffin was disinterred, the manuscript was recovered, and in 1870 the poems were given to the world.

The book was received with acclamation. Ruskin and Swinburne were enthusiastic. Among the poems most admired were *The Blessed Damozel, My Sister's Sleep, The Burden of Nineveh, Love's Nocturn,* and *Sister Helen.*

"The Blessed Damozel"

The Blessed Damozel, perhaps the best-known of his works, both from the poem and from the painting which he made upon it, tells how

The blessed damozel leaned out
  From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
  Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
  And the stars in her hair were seven.

. . . . . .

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
  Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
  With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
  Spins like a fretful midge.

. . . . . .

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
  Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
  Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
  The stars sang in their spheres.

She is waiting for her lover, still alive on earth, and aching for the hour when he will join her.

He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;
  Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
  Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
  My pride, and let me speak.

Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
  To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
  Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
  To their citherns and citoles.

. . . . . .

She gazed and listened and then said,
  Less sad of speech than mild,—

"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, filled
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres;
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

"The Burden of Nineveh"

The Burden of Nineveh is perhaps his finest poem. It made its first appearance anonymously, in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856, where Ruskin read it with extreme delight, and wrote to ask Rossetti, of all people in the world, if he knew who was the author! The opening explains itself:

In our Museum galleries
To-day I lingered o'er the prize
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—
Her Art for ever in fresh wise
From hour to hour rejoicing me.
Sighing I turned at last to win
Once more the London dirt and din;
And as I made the swing-door spin
And issued, they were hoisting in
A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er,
'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
A dead disbowelled mystery:
The mummy of a buried faith
Stark from the charnel without scathe,
Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—
Such fossil cerements as might swathe
The very corpse of Nineveh.

His mind goes back to the ancient city of Sardanapalus, in the days before it smouldered into sand—when Sennacherib may have knelt within the idol's shadow—when Queen Semiramis may have brought it gifts of zones of gold and precious spices; and at last there comes to him the striking thought that the time may be

> When some may question which was first,
> Of London or of Nineveh.
>
> For as that Bull-god once did stand
> And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
> Till these at last without a hand
> Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
> And blinded him with destiny:—
> So may he stand again: till now,
> In ships of unknown sail and prow,
> Some tribe of the Australian plough
> Bear him afar,—a relic now
> Of London, not of Nineveh!
>
> Or it may chance indeed that when
> Man's age is hoary among men,—
> His centuries threescore and ten,—
> His furthest childhood shall seem then
> More clear than later times may be:
> Who, finding in this desert place
> This form, shall hold us for some race
> That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,
> But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
> Unto the God of Nineveh.
>
> The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh
> The thought: . . . Those heavy wings spread high,
> So sure of flight, which do not fly;
> That set gaze never on the sky;
> Those scriptured flanks it cannot see;
> Its crown, a brow-contracting load;
> Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .
> (So grew the image as I trod):
> O Nineveh, was this thy God,—
> Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

Photo: J. Caswall-Smith, 90 Great Russell Street, W.C.1

"THE BLESSED DAMOZEL," BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

This picture was an attempt to realise on canvas the spiritual conception of Rossetti's early poem, *The Blessed Damozel*.

The Predella was commissioned later, and represents the earthly lover gazing up through space to the starry regions which hold his long-lost lady

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

"BEATA BEATRIX," BY D. G. ROSSETTI

Tate Gallery, London.

In Beata Beatrix, Rossetti put the best that was in him. The upturned face of the girl is the purest of all the images that have made his wife immortal.

Rossetti's own description of the picture may be quoted in part.

"The picture illustrates the 'Vita Nuova,' embodying symbolically the death of Beatrice as treated in that work. The picture is not intended at all to represent death, but to render it under the semblance of a trance, in which Beatrice, seated at a balcony overlooking the city, is suddenly rapt from earth to heaven."

In 1880 appeared a second volume, *Ballads and Sonnets,* of which the chief work is *The House of Life,* a hundred and one sonnets on the theme of love. That many of these are among the finest in the language is beyond dispute, but often they are overwrought and so obscure that Rossetti himself proposed to write an explanation of them—which he never did—and his brother William published a translation of them into prose. This is a defect, undoubtedly. Who requires a prose translation of the sonnets of Keats or Wordsworth? But many are as clear as dewdrops, and "beautiful exceedingly." Here is a part of the fourth sonnet, *Lovesight:*

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
  Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
  The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

"Lady Lilith"

And here is the whole of *Body's Beauty,* which is a replica in words of his own painting, *Lady Lilith* (see Colour Plate):

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
  (The witch he loved before the gift of Eve)
  That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
  And, subtly of herself contemplative,
  Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
  Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
  Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
  Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

The picture of Lady Lilith is, like all his paintings, a glowing mass of colour. He was, in poetry, a disciple of Keats, the greatest colourist in literature. Most curious, therefore is it to observe, that his verse has hardly any colour in it anywhere!

Rossetti wrote some charming songs, which have been often set to music. One of the sweetest is *A New-Year's Burden:*

Along the grass sweet airs are blown
  Our way this day in Spring.
Of all the songs that we have known
  Now which one shall we sing?
    Not that, my love, ah no!—
    Not this, my love? why so!—
Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.

The branches cross above our eyes,
  The skies are in a net:
And what's the thing beneath the skies
  We two would most forget?
    Not birth, my love, no, no,—
    Not death, my love, no, no,—
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago.

We must not leave Rossetti's work without glancing at his Ballads, which contain some of his very finest work, but which cannot easily be quoted. *The King's Tragedy* tells the story of Catherine Douglas thrusting her arm into the staple of the door to keep out the assassins of King James. *Sister Helen* relates how a forsaken girl melts a wax figure of her false lover so that he wastes away and dies. *Rose Mary,* the longest, and on the whole the finest, describes how another girl sees within a magic crystal an ambush waiting for her knight. She warns him not to take that road, but she is unaware that the crystal can only be read rightly by a stainless virgin, and she herself has tripped a little in the ways of love. Her young knight takes another road, rides straight into the ambush, and is slain.

In the year following the publication of *Ballads and Sonnets* Rossetti's health, which had long been failing, owing in part to

the free use of chloral, broke down entirely. He died at Birchington on April 9, 1882, and was buried in the little churchyard by the sea.

Was Rossetti greater as a painter, or, as he himself considered, as a poet? There are some who find it hard to say. Yet that charmed book of verses, that volume of a thousand visions, called up, as by a wizard's music, from "the shores of old romance!"—for ourselves, we should be slow to change it even for that gorgeous gallery of dreamy women with faces of unearthly beauty, gazing from bowers of blossom, reading strange lore in magic crystals, touching their lutes to unknown melodies, or drawing long combs of silver through their locks of golden flame.

§ 5

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Christina Rossetti, the younger sister of the painter-poet, was born two years after him, in 1830. She passed a quiet and secluded life—she was for many years devoted to her mother—and she never married, for, although two suitors sought her hand, one of them was a Roman Catholic and the other a free-thinker, so that, being a woman of intense religious views, she sent them both away. Poetry was with her a kind of mother-tongue. Almost literally it might be said of her that she lisped in numbers. "Writing poetry," said Victor Hugo, "is either easy or else impossible." "If poetry," said Keats, "comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." The maxim is by no means one of universal truth—her brother's poems, for example, like those of Horace and of Wordsworth, came to him only with agony and tears of blood—but it is the simple truth about Christina's. With far more verity than Tennyson she might have written:

> I do but sing because I must,
> And pipe but as the linnets sing.

And her songs are simple, dulcet, and translucent beyond those of almost all the singers of her time.

"Goblin Market"

In 1862 appeared her first volume, *Goblin Market and other Poems,* and three years later *The Prince's Progress,* both with illustrations by Rossetti. The poems which give their titles to these volumes are two ballads. *Goblin Market* tells the story of two girls who meet a band of goblin folk beside a forest stream, and buy, at the price of a golden lock of hair, a heap of magic fruits; one of the girls eats of them—the other dares not—and, later, wastes and wanes away; her sister, though in terror, ventures again to meet the goblin men, and wins from them an antidote which brings the dying girl to life. *The Prince's Progress* tells how a Prince sets out, alone, to meet his bride, who has long been pining for him in her lonely palace—how his progress is delayed; first by a milkmaid who is a kind of witch; next by an old man in a cavern who is boiling an elixir, who compels the Prince to blow his bellows, and who at last falls dead beside the cauldron; and then by a mountain-flood which nearly drowns him—so that when at length he comes in sight of the palace of his bride, he meets her funeral coming from the gates. Weary of waiting, she has pined to death. There are some who take this poem as a kind of allegory of life. It is a work of exquisite poetic beauty, and that is enough for us.

These poems, which are her longest, are not well fitted for quotation—they must be read throughout. But almost any of her songs will serve to show her gift in its perfection. Here is one—and for our purpose one is as good as many:

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

"A VISION OF FIAMMETTA," BY D. G. ROSSETTI

The model for Fiammetta, Rossetti's conception on canvas of the lady beloved by Boccaccio, was Mrs. W. J. Stillman, formerly Miss Marie Spartali.

The picture is a mass of colour. The figure clad from head to foot in a dull red robe, has hair of a reddish brown, but the most striking feature is the beautiful face, from which look out bright blue eyes providing a colour contrast with the pink-white blossom surrounding the whole picture.

Photo: Henry Dixon & Son

ROSE MARY AND THE BERYL STONE

From the painting by A. C. Cooke, exhibited in the Royal Academy.

"Held in the hand of some heavy law
Her eyes she might not once withdraw,
Nor shrink away from the thing she saw."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on, as if in pain
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

§ 6

EDWARD FITZGERALD

Omar Khayyam

Edward Fitzgerald was born in 1809, the son of a country squire, who left him ample means to live according to his liking. He chose to pass his days in rustic solitude, far from the madding crowd, a kind of dreamy hermit, a vegetarian who, in the phrase of his friend Tennyson, "lived on milk and meal and grass." He wrote a multitude of books, but all are half forgotten, with the exception of that single poem which has made his name immortal. He was forty-four when he began to render into English the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyam, the poet-astronomer of Persia—like himself a lounger in the flowery ways of life. For years on end he worked upon it, and finally submitted it to the editor of the *Fortnightly Review,* who kept it for a year and then returned it to the author. He had it printed at his own expense, but, as it had no sale whatever, he bestowed the copies as a gift on Bernard Quaritch, the bookseller, who first reduced the price from five shillings to half-a-crown, then to a shilling, and finally to a penny in the box outside his shop. By a rare stroke of fortune Rossetti bought a copy, and, bursting with enthusiasm, sent all

his friends to buy it. Swinburne became the owner of four copies. And so the book began to sell. It is a curious thought that, but for Rossetti's lucky dip, one of the gems of English poetry might have become lost for ever. Is there such another volume among the penny-boxes of to-day?

The qualities that have made the little work so famous, apart from the supreme beauty of the verse, are, first, its ever-popular philosophy of life, which is simply that of Herrick's song, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may"; and secondly, the glow and colour of its Oriental scenes, from the hour when morning strikes the Sultan's palace with a shaft of light to the glamour and magic of the wizard twilight, when a low large moon is hanging over perfumed gardens, where the guests, with winecup and rosy garlands, sit "star-scattered" on the grass.

Tennyson considered this to be the best translation ever made, alike in music, form, and colour. Here are some of the stanzas in which, like all lovers of great poetry, he especially delighted:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
  The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
  Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
  And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

Yet ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
  The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
  And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
  Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
  How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass
Among the Guests star-scattered on the grass,
  And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty glass!

§ 7

MATTHEW ARNOLD

A Lucid Prose-writer

Matthew Arnold (1822-88), who lies buried at Laleham, his birthplace, beside his beloved Thames, was a poet who never won, nor indeed sought, to be popular; and, likely enough, never will be. But upon many minds of his time and men of the kind that, in his own opinion, counted for most, his muse laid a spell that, passed on to another generation, is now never likely to be broken. In comparison with Tennyson and Browning he wrote little. In middle life he turned to become a prose-writer, and his prose challenges Newman's for lucidity, thought, and charm—there can be no higher praise. The fount of poetry never flows superabundantly in him, and in later years (as he quite honestly confessed) its channel dried. But the spring-water, while it lasted, ran limpidly, and if not

Gaily as the sparkling Thames,

yet with an occasional rare effervescence, now of youth and anon of medicinal salt.

Educated, after a brief trial of Winchester, at Rugby, under his father—the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold—he proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1841. At Rugby he had written a prize poem in *Alaric at Rome* and he repeated this success by winning the Newdigate Prize with a poem on *Cromwell;* missed his First Class at Oxford somewhat unaccountably, but atoned for this with an Oriel Fellowship—at that time the most justly envied of University honours. He remained at Oxford, however, but a short while; after an interval of schoolmastering he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, the President of the Council for Education, and was by him appointed, in 1851, an Inspector of Schools—a post in which for thirty-five years he conscientiously laboured with an intelligence which, at the time too seldom recognised, has been the late parent of many reforms and will come to be claimed for ancestor by many more. He died at the age of sixty-five of heart-failure, suddenly: a man (as the saying is) younger than his years, of fine presence, distinguished manners; cheerful in company; a little stiff, but in no wise ostentatious; above all, a good friend.

In the course of this somewhat uneventful life Arnold came under two compelling influences, both of which he repaid with piety; and (apart from his official tasks) left two indelible marks on his time. For the first influence—in school and Oxford days young Matthew customarily spent a great part of his vacations at Fox How near Grasmere, a house which his father had taken to refresh himself after the monotonous country around Rugby: and here, among the fells and streams of the Lake Country, he grew up under the thoughtful spell of Wordsworth, whose best interpreter he lived to become; to see Nature with Wordsworth's eyes and listen to her voices with Wordsworth's ear.

For the second, Matthew Arnold was, as has been hinted, by Nature a true friend; and at Oxford he had found one, Arthur

Hugh Clough, a fellow-Rugbeian, and by two or three years his senior, whom he adored and lived to immortalise.

To this friendship with Clough Arnold dedicated his two famous elegies, *The Scholar-Gipsy* and, more ceremonially *Thyrsis*. In the first he chants against

> This strange disease of modern life
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims;

but in the second his friend is lifted with the shepherd Daphnis, to look down in this unquiet world from the sill of the immortal gates.

On the whole, *Thyrsis* is the height of his descriptive achievement. The lines to the Cuckoo, which are a fair specimen, are of a beauty not excelled by anything of Tennyson's, nor indeed of any other poet, except Keats:

> So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
> When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
> Before the roses and the longest day—
> When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
> With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,
> And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
> So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
> From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
> Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
> The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!
>
> Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
> Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
> Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
> Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
> Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
> And stocks in fragrant blow;
> Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
> And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
> And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
> And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

Arnold was wayward, perhaps a little affectedly, in issuing, revoking, and revising his work. In 1849 he put forth a thin volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems by A.;* which was followed in 1852 by *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems, by A.* In 1853 he combined these two volumes and put his full name on the title-page, omitting (ill-advisedly) *Empedocles* with a few minor pieces and adding some wonderful things—*Sohrab and Rustum, The Church of Brou, Requiescat, The Scholar-Gipsy.* In 1855 appeared *Poems by Matthew Arnold, Second Series,* and in 1858 *Merope.*

But in the interval he had been elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. At the expiration of his term of office, in 1862, he was re-elected for another five years; and in 1865 appeared the first series of his *Essays in Criticism,* a sufficient pedestal for anyone lower than an actual poet, and an actual poet of a very high order. That Arnold a hundred years hence will occupy the height by right, is disputed by some, and there—since none of us will be there to check our prophecies—the question may be left. But in the meanwhile it is true to say, with the late Mr. Herbert Paul (*Matthew Arnold,* "English Men of Letters" Series): "Mr. Arnold did not merely criticise books himself. He taught others how to criticise them. He laid down principles, if he did not always keep the principles he laid down. Nobody, after reading *Essays in Criticism,* has any excuse for not being a critic." And above all, a wistful wisdom, between doubt and faith, which came home, as it does still, to many perplexed but not despairing spirits. He was the poet, indeed, of the profounder hesitations and inmost misgivings of his age. Witness the stern yet beautiful melancholy of his *Dover Beach,* in which the soft dirge of the waves makes him reflect:

> The Sea of Faith
> Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
> But now I only hear

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"BUY FROM US WITH A GOLDEN CURL."

This woodcut was designed by D. G. Rossetti as a frontispiece for his sister Christina's *Goblin Market*.

Photo. Knight's Collection

ELIZABETH BROWNING, BY F. TALFOURD

National Portrait Gallery, London

Rarely in literary history has a poet been married to a poetess. In the case of the Brownings the marriage of genius was a marriage of happiness

Its melancholy long withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world which seems
To lie behind us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night!

Or, again, hear him, in *Self-dependence,* compare man's restless heart and broken aims with the calm, unwavering ministry of the stars, and of the sea in its tidal fidelity to the universal order:

Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
There attain the mighty life you see.

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear:
"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery."

It is the message of Marcus Aurelius in other tones and times: "Look within." And, indeed, Arnold's words about the sad,

striving emperor-philosopher can be applied without alteration to himself: "And so he remains the especial friend and comforter of all clear-headed and scrupulous, yet pure-hearted and upward-striving men, in those ages more especially, that walk by sight, not by faith, but yet have no open vision. He cannot give such souls, perhaps, all they yearn for, but he gives them much; and what he gives them, they can receive."

§ 8

WILLIAM MORRIS

While Rossetti was painting, and teaching Burne-Jones to paint, under an influence derivative from Ruskin (a most helpful friend to these young enthusiasts), there came to him a young man, fresh from Oxford, who at once fell under the charm. This was William Morris (1834-96), recently articled to George Edmund Street, designer of the London Law Courts and one of the martyrs of the Gothic Revival in which Ruskin headed many to martyrdom. Morris had taken to architecture simply because he loved it, and characteristically he "appointed" himself rather than be an "art student." But already beneath his boyish enthusiasm there ran two fibres of conviction: the first that the arts could only be saved by going back to mediæval thoroughness and learning a workman's use of material and its handling; the second that all arts met together in the pursuit of beauty: and upon these, as time went on, there grew and increased a passionate conviction that the essential art, even of all politics as well as of all poetry, painting, sculpture, weaving, the designing of textiles, tissues, ceramics, glassware, was a craft with one single legitimate object—to make human life happier and diffuse joy "in widest commonalty spread." Few men ever can have been more modestly unconcerned with their own genius. Coming under Rossetti's influence, he adored and was content to paint and learn. His companions of the Rossetti circle called him "Topsy"—pro-

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"LADY LILITH," BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

This picture, one of a few examples of Rossetti's satisfaction towards [illegible] was [illegible] and dated 1864, [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

bably because, like the negro-child in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he made no claim that Nature travailed at his birth, but simply " 'spected he growed." When he and his "master" Rossetti went down to Oxford on their gay adventures of painting a series of frescoes for the Oxford Union Society, Morris was writing poetry as a child might. Towards the end of a day's work Rossetti, resting on a sofa, would say, "Topsy, read us one of your grinds," and Morris, fidgeting, would blurt through something like this:

> Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
> And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
> And a golden girdle round my sweet;—
> Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Or these lines from the Introduction to *The Earthly Paradise:*

> Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
> I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
> Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
> Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
> Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
> Or hope again for aught that I can say,
> The idle singer of an empty day.
>
> Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
> Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
> Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
> Telling a tale not too importunate
> To those who in the sleepy region stay,
> Lulled by the singer of an empty day.
>
> So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
> If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
> Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
> Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
> Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
> Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
> Not the poor singer of an empty day.

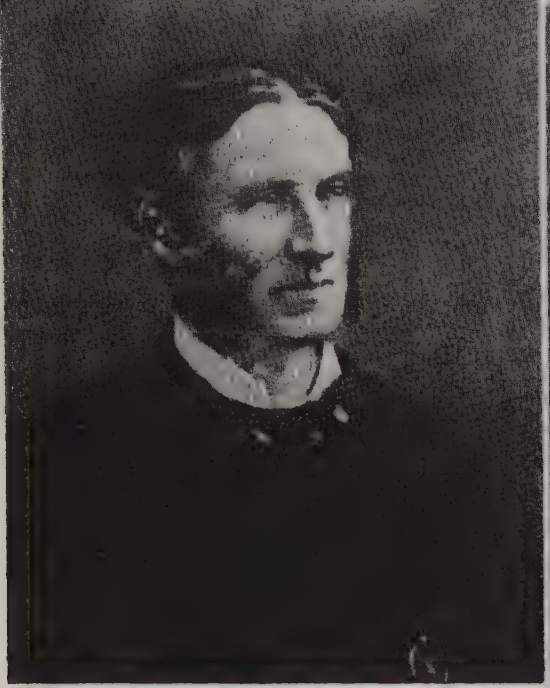
Verses such as these, and the songs in *Love is Enough,* prove that he could "an' he would" have been eminent as a lyrist in an age of lyrists. But, having found his power in poetry, Morris (who was always a great man of his hands) did not shrink from great themes and mediæval length, even from mediæval monotony—always decorated along its length by tapestried decorations and delicacies after the manner of the gilt cowslips patterned at the feet of goddesses in an early Italian painting. *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), his master work in verse *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), his story of *Sigurd the Volsung* (1877), and his translations of the *Æneid* (1876) and of the *Odyssey* (1887) are all strong sustained efforts "at long breath" and suggest a Chaucer of later times, harking back for a forward wind and strongly recovering it. In all that he did there was something of a grand, god-like boy in Morris: and he stands out, straight and large, among the Pre-Raphaelites as a man innocent of crankiness or self-advertisement; truly, utterly self-sacrificing and innocently great.

Arthur Hugh Clough

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61) has already been named as Arnold's most intimate friend at Rugby and Oxford. Like Arnold, he gradually gave up the orthodoxy in which he had been bred. His latest biographer, Mr. James Insley Osborne, has aptly described him as a specialist in intellectual honesty. He strove, as few young men strove, for self-knowledge and self-control, and for the vision and habit of duty. In one of his early poems he cries:

> Come back again, my olden heart!
> I said, Behold I perish quite,
> Unless to give me strength to start
> I make myself my rule of right.

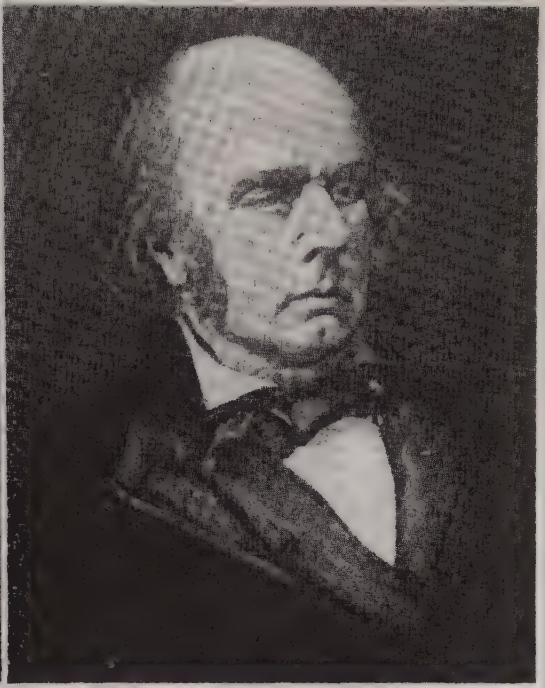
The poem by which, more than any other, Clough lives to-day, is his "Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth":



MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Poet and Critic.

After the portrait by Joseph Simpson, R.B.A.



EDWARD FITZGERALD

After the portrait by Joseph Simpson, R.B.A.

Fitzgerald lives in literature for his paraphrase of *Omar Khayyam*.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Poet, Socialist, and Craftsman

From the portrait by G. F. Watts, R.A.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

Photo. Fredk. Hollyer

"THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS," BY D. G. ROSSETTI

This quaint little scene is very characteristic of Rossetti's fertility and originality of invention. William Morris, with whom the picture was an especial favourite, used its romantic title as a theme on which to base a poem

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fear may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
Where daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward look, the land is bright.

Coventry Patmore

Coventry Patmore (1823-96) may perhaps be described as a poet with an audience all his own. Only once, and that early, did he appeal to a wide public with his *Angel in the House,* an idyll of married love and domestic peace which, though marred by some elements of naïveté and sugariness, contains many beautiful lines and passages, such as:

Alone, alone with sky and sea
And her, the third simplicity.

And again:

His only Love and she is wed!
His fondness comes about the heart
As milk comes when the babe is dead.

Once more:

The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,
And, as the sun or shadows fell,
So these were green and those were gold;

In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,
And breadths of primrose lit the air,
Which, wandering through the woodland stoop'd
And gather'd perfumes here and there;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,
And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among
Fit for their only listener, Heaven.

Of all his writings Patmore set most value on his little book of meditations and apophthegms, *Rod, Root, and Flower* (1895), in which he attempted to gather his quintessential experience of life and his deepest beliefs as a Roman Catholic student of man and his relations to time and eternity. One of his thoughts was this: "Science is a line, art a superficies, and life, or the knowledge of God, a solid."

The late Victorian anarchy seems interesting and tolerable, until one considers the dreadful waste of it in solitariness, in suicidal depression or suicidal relief from depression such as killed *James Thomson* (1834-82), author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, many captivating lyrics, and that most awful of short poems, *In the Room*. A sense of unspeakable loneliness descends on the spirit as we consider Thomson's actual fate and compare it with what might have happened with but a little encouragement from his fellow-poets. But

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see below them
The earth and men.

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XXX

DICKENS AND THACKERAY

By G. K. Chesterton

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By G. K. Chesterton

§ 1

Victorian Fiction

VICTORIAN fiction is a historical fact, and is a thing sufficiently solid to justify a separate study. Of course every study really requires an introduction, and that introduction requires another introduction, leading back to the creation of the world. Nobody could explain the nature of Victorian England without going back at least to Roman Britain. Nobody could explain the nature of the novel without beginning at latest with the Greek and mediæval romances, or latest, but certainly not least, with that true origin of the honour and humanity of English fiction, the genius of Geoffrey Chaucer. Nor would anyone, of course, take the very term Victorian too literally, or the period of the long reign as anything but a coincidence that is also a convenience. Nobody would call an old Jacobin a Victorian because he died just after Victoria succeeded, nobody would call a young Bolshevist a Victorian because he was born just before Victoria died. But there was a norm or nucleus to which the later nineteenth century does really correspond. Victorianism is something that can be separated from its historical surroundings; and all the more because it more or less

separated itself. It was a very English garden; it was a very large garden; but it had a very high hedge.

The nearest we can get to naming this quality is something like this. The Victorian mind had gained certain liberties within certain limits; but the point of it was that it believed that those limits as well as those liberties were eternal. Indeed, it was a mark of Victorianism that even its accidents looked eternal. There are a number of institutions which still exist; but because they have been Victorian we feel vaguely that they must always exist. Probably they will do nothing of the kind, for they are only individual experiments like any shop or private school. But the point is that their names still sound like something more solid. If *The Times* were really to come suddenly to an end, we should all feel as if a cosmic clock had stopped. If we really heard that *Punch* was dead, it would seem the passing of a whole order like the Pagan lamentation that Pan was dead. It is difficult to imagine Bradshaw's Railway Guide belonging to anybody but Bradshaw; or to believe that Bradshaw is not an abstraction like Britannia. Even Mr. Mudie has about him a mysterious savour of immortality.

We shall discover, it is to be feared, that all this is an illusion. But we shall not discover the trick of producing that illusion. None of our huge modern monopolies and experiments of millionaires have the slightest suggestion of such permanence. Now the Victorians contrived to give this air even to those of their conventions that really were arbitrary or even absurd. They made a compromise, which did not seem to be a mere stopgap, between their limitations and their liberties. The case for it was that the liberties really were sufficiently large for the comfortable classes at least to feel comfortable. Yet the controls were there; but it was a mark of the time that the controls were disguised as conventions, and even accepted as unconscious conventions. Like its typical product, the public-school boy, the individual was encouraged to

be a man of the world, but hardly of the real world; certainly not of the whole world. I say the comfortable classes and the public-school boy, because this marks the real if unconscious vice of Victorian England. It was not really taking thought for the whole people, as were in a way its chief Continental rivals; though France did it by the way of liberty and Germany by the way of slavery. But the typical Victorian gentry really were happy; that is, they felt free enough to be comfortable and orderly enough to be safe. For a whole generation, for instance, men were content to identify Free Trade with freedom. At the beginning of the nineteenth century industrialism was an experiment; by the end of the nineteenth century it was a problem. But for a time between it was really an atmosphere, if a smoky atmosphere; its omnibuses and lamp-posts were a landscape that seemed permanent like the fields. In everything it had this power of treating its own compromise as commonsense, and anything more logical as something lawless. It was equally disgusted with the clericalism and the anti-clericalism of the Continent. It was horrified alike by the strictness of the Russian censor and the licence of the Russian realists; it remained to the last equally shocked by blasphemy and bored by theology.

One concrete expression of this spirit was the creation of a certain kind of novel. It was called for convenience in Victorian times the three-volume novel; and it was called in derision in post-Victorian times the pleasant novel, the harmless novel, the quite nice novel, the novel with a happy ending. But nobody thus negatively condemning it appreciates the point of the Victorian compromise, unless he realises that the novel was for all, and that for many it was a liberation as well as a limit. Its unique character appears most in the matter of the difficult problem of decorum. In this Victorian age England was insular in time as well as space; it was an island in the ages. It submitted to an expurgation that was new in England as well as

in Europe. But the point to seize is, that though it had something of the character of an interlude it had nothing of the restlessness of an interregnum. There might be more licence before and more licence after, but this age regarded itself as an age of liberty. George Moore was regarded as advanced because he was as candid as Henry Fielding, while Henry Fielding was still regarded as antiquated because he was as realistic as George Moore. But in the interlude people not only felt comfortable, they felt free. And in one sense there was a greater average of freedom. Nobody read what was open to the Frenchman, but everybody read what was forbidden to the French girl. Fiction was not, as on the Continent, caught into the controversies of religion and revolution. Continental fiction came to us indirectly, through a sort of filter or veil; a Frenchman might have said that the sun in its strength could only turn our fog into a vague glow. The sun, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was at its glorious noon, was the greatness of Balzac. It is typical of the whole time that he seems to have influenced English novelists but not English novel-readers. Dickens has something of Balzac in the variety and vast number of his characters; Thackeray in the ugly picturesqueness of his shabby-genteel stories; his fine shades of shady people. In the latter case there probably is an influence; and it is curious to read between the lines of Thackeray's Paris Sketch-book; to note the Victorian in Paris who has come to patronise and remains to praise. In the latter case there is hardly more than a coincidence; the vitality and variety of Dickens were his own; and in so far as he inherited a tradition, it was the old gross and grotesque and essentially English tradition of Smollett or of Sterne. But by the time of Dickens the old coarse and comic novel had fallen from the hands of these great men; it had not only fallen low but fallen flat. And for several reasons Dickens comes naturally as the first figure in the procession.

Photo: London Stereoscopic Co.

CHARLES DICKENS

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MR. PICKWICK

After an Illustration in colour by Frank Reynolds, R.I.

The immortal Mr. Pickwick with a portmanteau in his hand, his telescope in his greatcoat pocket, and his note book in his waistcoat, returning to the scene of his discoveries worthy of being noted down

§ 2

CHARLES DICKENS

[*Charles Dickens was born at Portsmouth in* 1812. *At the time of his birth his father, the original Mr. Micawber, a man constantly in debt and difficulty, for whom nothing ever "turned up," was a dockyard clerk. The novelist's mother was the original of Mrs. Nickleby. From such strange sources will genius sometimes spring. The family removed to London when Dickens was quite a small boy. Their fortunes varied from a comparative prosperity to direst poverty. Dickens has described these early days in the first part of "David Copperfield." As a young man he learned shorthand and became a Parliamentary reporter. His first book, "The Sketches by Boz," was published in* 1836. *In the same year he began to write "Pickwick," which was a phenomenal success and made Dickens famous when he was twenty-four. The rest of his life was spent in ceaseless and amazing creation. "Pickwick" was followed by "Oliver Twist," "Nicholas Nickleby," "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Barnaby Rudge," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and "A Christmas Carol." In* 1846 *he became the first editor of the "Daily News." Two years later he finished "Dombey and Son," and this was followed by "David Copperfield," "Little Dorrit," "The Tale of Two Cities," "The Uncommercial Traveller," "Great Expectations," "Our Mutual Friend," and "Edwin Drood," which was unfinished at the time of his death in* 1870.

Dickens twice visited America, frequently travelled on the Continent, and wore out his strength with readings from his novels. No novelist was ever so popular in his own country, and in his own time.—Ed.]

A Creative Genius

Dickens was not a Victorian; he was a giant who stood rather in the relation of the legendary father or founder of a city. His

best work had already begun before the accession of the Queen; but, what is much more important, that work was the legacy of an older, in some ways larger and certainly looser tradition. The comic novel that he continued had come into existence before the nineteenth century had even discovered its problems, let alone the solutions of its problems. It belonged to an older and simpler world of pure creation. It was by comparison more like that prehistoric world, which did really so far justify the legend of a golden age, that people could make up fairy-tales without knowing it. The gigantic and creative quality of Dickens is in a sense outside the Victorian era, and even outside the nineteenth century. He did indeed become so far controversially concerned about the problems and maladies of the nineteenth century, as to make himself a morality that would have flamed into fury against the priggish prohibitions of the twentieth century. He did indeed adopt a humanitarian view of life, which was humane as well as humanitarian, and human as well as humane. But his creative power was what made him powerful; and his impulse to use it came from the coarse and comic literature of the eighteenth century. But it marks the pressure of Victorian principles on him, that with him it was comic but no longer coarse.

The Pickwick Papers

At that moment, as a matter of fact, it was not even very comic. The truth is that Dickens started with stale and vulgar types, and by his own poetic fancy made the stale things startling and the vulgar things artistic. We talk of the imitation of great models; but good literature is sometimes based on bad literature, and great men sometimes model themselves on small ones. It is a great gap in all literary history that the bad literature of the past is forgotten. But if we could only wander in that wilderness of waste-paper, we should probably find a great many *Pickwick Papers* without Pickwick. There was then a vast amount of broad farce of the type of Jack Bragg or Verdant Green; the

point is that Dickens could write the same broad farce so that it was also fine comedy. Take any one out of a hundred illustrations from *Pickwick* alone. Dickens was only there to illustrate his own illustrator. But no sooner were the stock characters settled for him than he began to unsettle them. They began to take on shapes more fantastic than those of mere farce; and men were almost astonished to find that something which was professedly comic was also profoundly funny. The element which entered here is indescribable; but a description of it would be a description of Dickens. It can only be suggested, not by description, but by example. Mr. Dowler in *Pickwick* is in his original outline a very conventional comic figure. Numberless novels and plays have presented the swollen figure of the bully, swaggering across the stage only to end in some collapse of cowardice. We are all familiar with the fire-eating major in a three-act farce, who damns and swears with the monotony of a machine-gun. Dowler is quite as noisy; but it is not in his noise that we hear the unique note which is Dickens's. It is a sort of sudden and unexpected moderation, an air of abrupt composure and lucidity, a hush before the storm which raises the whole horrible absurdity high into a sort of seventh heaven of humour. Consider the artistic quality of this paragraph, in which Mr. Dowler first refers to his wife.

> "You shall," replied Dowler, "she shall know you. She shall esteem you. I courted her under singular circumstances. I won her through a rash vow. Thus. I saw her; I loved her; I proposed; she refused me.—'You love another?'—'Spare my blushes.'—'I know him?'—'You do.'—'Very good, if he remains here I'll skin him'."
>
> "Lord bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick involuntarily. "Did you skin the gentleman, sir?" enquired Mr. Winkle with a very pale face.
>
> "I wrote him a note. I said it was a painful thing. And so it was."

"Certainly," interposed Mr. Winkle.

"I said I had pledged my word as a gentleman to skin him. My character was at stake. I had no alternative. As an officer in His Majesty's Service, I was bound to do it. I regretted the necessity, but it must be done. He was open to conviction. He saw that the rules of the service were imperative. He fled. I married her. Here's the coach. That's her head."

Nobody will get anywhere near the inspiration of that passage by classifying Dowler with a lot of low-comedy characters. It is entirely by a new breath of genius that the stuffed figure of the stage bully begins to move; begins, still more unexpectedly, to stand still; to pause, ponder, to question himself about the gravity and delicacy of the task of skinning another gentleman, under the compulsion of etiquette and good form. It is that sudden sobriety of Dowler that marks the imaginative inspiration or intoxication of Dickens. Dowler may be an invention as insanely impossible as his scheme for skinning a rival in Bath; but he is not a mechanical invention. He is not a machine-gun like the major who explodes with oaths like shots, at the same recurrent intervals. He is an imaginative creation, and has his own life, if it be the life of griffins and goblins; a life with its own variations, pauses, changes of tone and halts of hesitation or distraction.

But as in Dowler, so in every one of the Dickens types, there is originality in the detail even when there is comparative dullness in the design. There may be any number of shabby swindlers in fiction; but there is only one who said, after unsuccessful attempts to borrow five shillings and half a crown, "Why, then we come to the ridiculously small sum of eighteenpence." There may be any number of burlesques of blighted love in literature and journalism, but there was only one man who said, "I never loved a dear gazelle to charm me with its soft brown eye, but when it came to know me well, and loved me, it

Photo. W. A. Mansell & Co.

DOLLY VARDEN

From the picture by W. P. Frith, R.A.

South Kensington Museum, London

The characters in costume novels are selected not only with their appropriate costumes, but also because they seem to be the types which best describe them. Dolly Varden, who is a character in Charles Dickens's novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, published in 1841, is the heroine of the story. Dickens, who had a keen eye for the humorous side of life, has described Dolly as a coquette, who loves admiration and flattery.

was sure to go and marry a market-gardener." There may be any number of small henpecked husbands in conventional comic writing; but only one ever had to listen to his wife's description of a tall admirer in early days, ending with her father's deep-voiced prophecy, "This will end in a little man." Commonplace comedy is full of drunkards; but there never was but one drunkard inspired by heaven to ask Mrs. Todgers for her ideal of a wooden leg; it is full of jealous husbands, but there was but one voice that could greet a guest at breakfast by saying "Serpent!" in the deep and hollow tones of Mr. Pott; it is full of foolish and extravagant dandies, but only one of them ever bought a horse with head, legs, and tail, all of the demdest beauty. It is in the management and treatment of these traditional jokes that Dickens shows his originality; it is in the little touches that his genius is really gigantic. We sometimes expect them to be old types, but we always find that they are new ones. It is exactly these fine shades in Dickens which are generally missed by the fastidious, who profess to despise Dickens and to devote themselves to fine shades. He is really more subtle than such critics expect him to be; for he brings such subtleties out of very crude simplicities. Anybody can make fun of tragic characters or tragic conditions; generally speaking, one cannot make fun of anything else. But Dickens did achieve a stranger triumph in the traditional art of his time. He made comic characters comic.

The Immortal Characters of Dickens

The transition from the traditional to the individual humour is of course more characteristic of his earlier than his later work; for his later work is unmistakably individual. By the time he had finished *Pickwick,* it was already impossible that so creative an artist should ever again fill up any design but his own. And, indeed, the design of his next novel, *Oliver Twist,* was in every possible way the contrary to the design of *Pickwick.* But it is in that vein of horror which ran parallel in him to the vein of

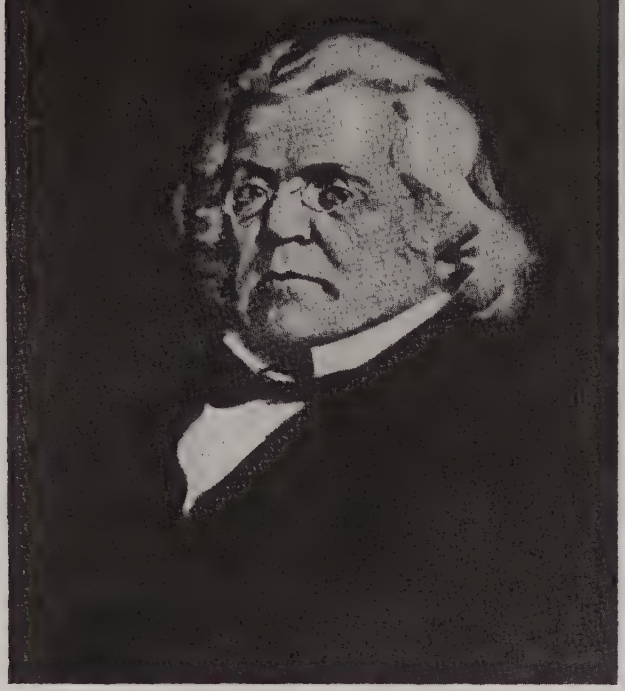
humour; and which is perhaps the next best and brightest of his particular talents. Even here, however, Bumble is something more than the beadle whom anyone could see outside the church-door, and the Artful Dodger is something more than the gutter-snipe whom everybody sees in the gutter. The *Old Curiosity Shop* is brightened by the presence of Mr. Swiveller, whose poetical allusions are of an inspired appropriateness and inappropriateness; a very Glorious Apollo. But Mr. Chuckster is almost as good as Mr. Swiveller, though Mr. Chuckster only appears once or twice for two or three minutes in the whole course of the book. And this brings us to that quality of procreative fertility and multiplicity which is already noted in *Pickwick,* and which marks all these earlier books if possible more unmistakably than the later ones. The miracle of Dickens is that all the men who are the machinery of the story are men and not machines. We may not be able to believe in them, but we are forced to imagine them; and above all we are forbidden to forget them. In the same sense in which we know Sam Weller we know the surly groom who appears for a moment offering (for the sum of half a crown) to knock off the head of Sam Weller; in the same way in which we know Mr. Skimpole we know the hard-headed person called Coavinses who calls once to arrest Mr. Skimpole; in the same sense in which Mr. Perker is credible, Mr. Perker's clerk is credible. Perhaps the right word is not credible; but rather incredibly real.

One way of testing this quality in Dickens is to read any good novel, and notice how much of it is necessarily left colourless where Dickens would have put in the colour of character, if we call it only the colour of caricature. We think it quite natural that some young man of fashion like Pendennis should pay off a cab and go about his own affairs; but in Dickens we should very probably have had one brief beautiful glimpse of the cabman and his affairs. We think it reasonable that some aristocrat like Sir Willoughby Patterne should have a valet or a

gamekeeper; but in Dickens he would very likely have had a living valet and an everlasting gamekeeper. We might have made the acquaintance, or even the friendship, of the man who blacked the boots of Archdeacon Grantley or the man who cut the hair of Daniel Deronda. I do not suggest that these other great works have not their own equally unique and unapproachable merits; I only say that this merit of Dickens is unique and unapproachable. But there is another way of testing the truth which is yet more convenient in illustrating the contrast. A hostile critic might say that in Dickens each person is not a personality but rather a pose. But it has often happened that a man has devoted his whole personality to maintaining such a pose. And Dickens was at the least a versatile actor, who could throw himself easily into a thousand such poses. More than one brilliant individual, in modern times, has made his intellectual fortune by following out one vein of humour because it was individual. But Dickens was a labyrinth of such veins of humour and could follow them all up simultaneously. It might be the fashion in a whole society for a whole season to talk like Mr. Mantalini, and to get the richest effects out of that rococo affectation, rather as Mr. P. G. Wodehouse gets the richest effects out of the limp language of Archie. But Dickens could talk like Mr. Mantalini and talk like Mr. Vincent Crummles as well. It might be a literary game or joke to find appropriate quotations like those of Swiveller and Micawber; but Dickens could play that game and twenty other games at the same time. Nor need the argument be merely hypothetical; in one case at least it is actually historical. Take, for the sake of argument, the case of the character of Skimpole. The humour of that artistic irresponsibility, of that insolent childishness which lives for beauty alone, the fun of that delicate detachment from conduct, the irony of that innocent contempt for the Philistine; all that joke was worked for all it was worth by Wilde and the Decadents of the nineties. They worked the joke wittily and well, but it

was the only joke they had. Take it at its very best; take the most airy incongruities of such artistic detachment out of the *Green Carnation* or *The Importance of Being Earnest;* and you will not find anything that strikes the note so exactly as the passage in which Mr. Skimpole receives his baker's bill, with gentle remonstrance referring to the beauty of the sunshine and the flowers. "Do not, I beseech you, interpose between me and a scene so sublime the absurd figure of an angry baker." If Wilde had ever thought of that, he would have been proud to write it. But Wilde was not content merely to write it, but went on to live it; and threw away his life upon that one isolated joke. The Decadent remained rigid in that one particular pose of humour; and passed on his way despising Dickens without knowing that he was himself only one of the Dickens characters. He devoted himself to it like a monstrous martyr of evil; he followed it into the shadow of death and hell, so much was he resolved to take his one joke seriously. And meanwhile Dickens, having made that joke among a hundred others, had forgotten it and passed on to new creations; he was already writing in the next few pages about the widely and wildly different humour of Chadband or of Mrs. Bayham Badger. He had already seized, in the oratory of Chadband, the root of something infinitely ridiculous in the very nature of the rhetorical question. Mr. Chadband was already asking questions which he did not want answered, or which he insisted on answering himself. He was already writing, "If the master of this house went out into the highways and the bye-ways and saw an eel, and were to return and say unto the mistress of this house, 'Sarah, rejoice with me for I have seen an elephant,' would that be the Trewth?" That passage is pure imagination; it is a vision.

These positive merits are the things that matter. That Dickens had a great many demerits as a writer is too obvious to be important. Though in his later works he took on more of the modern ambitions of psychology and artistic construction, he



WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

After the portrait by Joseph Simpson, R.B.A.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

GADSHILL NEAR ROCHESTER

Purchased by Dickens in 1856, he made it his permanent home in 1860. He spent the last few years of his life at Gadshill, dying there on June 8, 1870.

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A SCENE FROM "HENRY ESMOND"

After the drawing by Hugh Thomson

My Lord Castlewood's old joke with his daughter Beatrice concerning the possibility of her future marriage with Lord Mohun calls forth the innocent but unfortunate retort from the child: "I think my lord would rather marry mamma than marry me, and is waiting till you die to ask her."

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MRS. GAMP

After the drawing by F. G. Lewin

Sairey Gamp, in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, is one of his most out-standing and best-known studies. Thrown her, Dickens dealt a death-blow to the drunken nurse of the period.

never lost the melodramatic and farcical conventions of his youth. He became a realist only by comparison with himself. *Bleak House* is better constructed than *Oliver Twist,* but not better constructed than *Armadale. David Copperfield* is more quietly realistic than *Nicholas Nickleby,* but not more so than *Framley Parsonage.* And these later novels cover the chief turn of his career; for his complete satisfaction with the old comic novel practically petered out in *Martin Chuzzlewit,* where he himself seems to have grown dissatisfied with it, and deliberately redeemed it with the brilliant parenthesis of the satire on America. This novel was really the next after *The Old Curiosity Shop;* for I think *Barnaby Rudge* really stands apart with the later *Tale of Two Cities;* exceptional excursions that had rather the character of foreign travel, in search of the picturesque rather than in acceptance of the daily humours of humanity. Then follows *Dombey and Son,* which was a sort of transition, and with *David Copperfield* he begins the more serious and more modern novels: *David Copperfield, Hard Times, Bleak House, Great Expectations, Little Dorrit,* and *Our Mutual Friend;* with the broken epilogue of *Edwin Drood.* But the modern seriousness still has very much of the ancient farce; some of the flights of Mr. Podsnap are as preposterously sublime as those of Mr. Pecksniff, and the epitaph of Mrs. Sapsea is as theatrical as a poster of Mr. Crummles. If this exaggeration is a fault, it was a fault of Dickens; and even of the later Dickens. But there are faults which a more subtle criticism might recognise or admit. He never quite understood that while there is a most excellent thing called exuberant humour, there ought to be no such thing as exuberant pathos. A man may give himself up gloriously to his laughter; but he ought always to be resisting his tears. Pathos can only be brief and stoical; and the one really pathetic thing in Dickens is the talk of old Weller about his dead shrew of a wife; precisely because there the author had wallowed too deep in Wellerian fun to wallow in sentimental

sorrow. It is also urged, and not without truth, that Dickens had a trick of taking one element or train of thought in a man and drawing it out to infinity like a conjurer's reels out of a hat, leaving the rest of the man behind. It is enough to answer here that there are few such conjurers, with the hat or with the head. To those who condemn Dickens for mere exaggeration, we may merely make the suggestion that they should go up to the next man they meet, and begin to exaggerate him. They will soon find that, so far from understanding everything, they do not understand anything, even enough to exaggerate it.

§ 3

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

[*William Makepeace Thackeray was born in Calcutta in* 1811, *educated at Charterhouse and Trinity, Cambridge. He married in* 1836, *and his first book, "The Paris Sketch Book," was published in* 1840. *In the following year, appeared a collection of "Comic Tales and Sketches," which had first been published in magazines. In the same year Thackeray published "The Hogarty Diamond," "The Shabby Genteel Story," "Barry Lyndon," and "Men's Wives." In* 1842 *he joined the staff of "Punch" as writer and draughtsman, and five years later "Vanity Fair" was published in monthly numbers. It was followed by "Pendennis," "Esmond," "The Newcomes," and that charming children's story "The Rose and the Ring." In January* 1860 *the "Cornhill Magazine" was published for the first time with Thackeray as its editor, and his "Round About Papers" were published in that magazine. His last book was "Dennis Duval." He died in* 1863.

Thackeray was never really happy as a novel-writer. He once described novel-writing as "a dreadful trade." Had the financial returns been the same, he would have vastly preferred

to write history—"The Four Georges" is a specimen of his quality. "I like history," he once said; "it is so gentlemanly."—Ed.]

Dickens has been dealt with here at some length because he really gives its vitality to the Victorian age. Take away Dickens and the Victorian age would really be only Victorian; in the sense implied by those who call everything conventional and commonplace Victorian. There were other powerful novelists in the time; but none that seem also to be outside the time. Dickens alone began by producing an epic and ended by leaving a legend. But in his own time and long after there was a curious custom of recognising a rivalry, and therefore a sort of equality, between Dickens and Thackeray. Nor can it be denied that this convention is also a convenience. It is a convenience in this place; because Thackeray, coming soon after Dickens, does represent the way in which the Victorian novel moved away from the old comic novel, and all that it gained and lost. Thackeray in one sense also began with broad humour; but even when it was broad humour it was very grim humour. He began by making fun of a footman; but it is only necessary to compare his footman, I will not say with Sam Weller, but with any of Sam Weller's friends the footmen at the Swarry, to realise how little there is of high spirits in the other's high life below stairs. Thackeray's footmen took service with Mr. Deuceace and not Mr. Pickwick; he was a detective as well as a domestic, and he dogged Mr. Deuceace through many years and through many novels. There is a passage at the end of a chapter in the *Book of Snobs* which rises to real nobility of style, and expresses the real instinct or intention of Thackeray. It describes the huge house of the bankrupt Lord Carabas, with its vast and fearful fourpost bedstead, in which a murder might be committed at one end without being known at the other. It touches on little tales about tradesmen and servants, and concludes: "And have we not after all reason to be thankful that we are of the middle

rank, and are out of the reach of the amazing arrogance and the astounding meanness, to which that wretched old victim is obliged to mount and to descend."

The meanness of magnificence was from the first the imaginative motive of Thackeray. To make a study of it he was sometimes sordid; to make a contrast to it he was sometimes sentimental. But the passage I have quoted remains the expression of his chief emotion; and it is worthy of remark that even in those few words there are many of the essentials of the Victorian culture. The notion of the middle class as the normal of humanity was very Victorian. And the notion of the meanness of magnificence was often extended to suggest something more questionable than the evil of arrogance or the humiliation of bankruptcy. There was a feeling that a herald in a tabard, a bishop in a mitre, a king in a crown, or even a soldier in a uniform, was absurd, because he was magnificent. It never crossed the true Victorian mind that some might say that a merchant in a top-hat with mutton-chop whiskers was absurd because he was not magnificent. In this respect Victorianism was somewhat cut off from history, and therefore from humanity. In its trust in middle-class things it was somewhat separated from popular things; and swords and sceptres, mitres and blazonry, are very popular things.

"Vanity Fair"

Thackeray really makes his entrance into Victorian literature with *Vanity Fair*. He had paved the way for it with many smaller studies mostly of the Deuceace kind; but it is with this great work that the world becomes conscious of the man who had set out to satirise the world, or at least the worldliness of the world. For the work attempted in the tale, and even implied in the title, is undoubtedly that of setting all that society in a clear light and a cold air that would wither it with truth. For this purpose he made the scheme of it the story of two girls, who

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

HAIR AND DESK OF CHARLES DICKENS, USED BY HIM AT GADSHILL, AND NOW IN POSSESSION OF HIS SON, H. F. DICKENS, K.C.

Photo. Rischgitz Collection.

2 BRICK COURT, TEMPLE, WHERE THACKERAY LIVED AND GOLDSMITH DIED

Photo: Reeshgir, Collection

THE GRAVE OF "LITTLE NELL"

From the drawing by George Cattermole.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The scene depicted above, taken from *The Old Curiosity Shop*, is well known to all Dickens lovers. The death of Little Nell weighed heavily upon the old man, her grandfather. Daily he waited at her grave in the little village church, refusing to realise that she was lost to him for ever, until on a genial day in the spring-time the old man was found dead by the grave, his weary vigil ended.

set out from school together in the very first chapter. One of them sets out more or less successfully to conquer the world, and yet is in a sense conquered; the other allows the world to crush her, and yet is not wholly crushed. Some injustice is done to the novelist's art by those who do not allow for the deliberate structural simplicity of this contrast. Those who are content to say that they "cannot stand Amelia" or that Thackeray's good women are duffers, do not see the point of the story. Thackeray did not think that all good women were as soft as Amelia; he suggested a much more militant type in the scene where Laura refuses Pendennis, or in many of the nobler moments of Ethel Newcome. He deliberately made Amelia as silly as possible and Becky as clever as possible, in order to ask his final question. He asks whether one can really get much more out of the world, even by being as clever as Becky, than one can get even while being as silly as Amelia. The former suffers as much from success as the latter from failure; indeed, the former not only fails when she succeeds, but fails because she succeeds. The question thus asked is not cynical, though it might be called sceptical; it would be truer to say that it is sceptical even of cynicism. But even in the scepticism there is the more humane moral that Thackeray meant and indeed loved to draw. You cannot crush the affections out of a person like Amelia; in a sense she is too soft to be crushed; and it may well be questioned whether even thwarted affection is not more contented than thwarted ambition. To bring out this distinction it was artistically inevitable to exaggerate the meekness of the victim; in order to end, as with a kind of Christian irony, with the question of whether the victim was not really better off than the victor. But this justification from design is rather left out of account in the criticism of Thackeray. The reason, I think, lies in Thackeray's narrative method. It has the superficial air of being quite without design; and in that sense any one of his chapters is a chapter of accidents. He seems to be rambling

through the story and stopping to gossip with the characters; and three-quarters of the tale comes to the reader by rumour or hearsay; by the gossip of the clubs or the reports of passers-by. Yet it was precisely by this method that Thackeray did manage to build up a massive effect of actuality. Only Dickens can tell a Dickens story; it all rests on the oath of his genius and vision. The story is told by so brilliant a story-teller that we cannot quite forget that he might be a liar. But in *Vanity Fair* we seem to hear a confusion of voices; and to know what twenty or thirty people thought of Lord Steyne or Miss Crawley. This does give a certain sense of solid things that can be seen from all sides like statues, which Dickens never gave by his flat though flamboyant portraits. But the effect is gained by a multitude of little touches; most of them indirect and all of them incidental. The method seems the most unmethodical in the world; it seems so informal as to be almost formless. So that when we refer back to the original form of the whole story, and conceive it as a contrast between two feminine figures, the defence seems too startling a simplification. The artist is made the victim of an argument in a circle, of a kind that is not uncommon; as when men argue that Catholics cannot be philosophers, and therefore philosophers must secretly have been heretics. The critic first accuses the artist of being artless, and then forbids him to plead the success of his art.

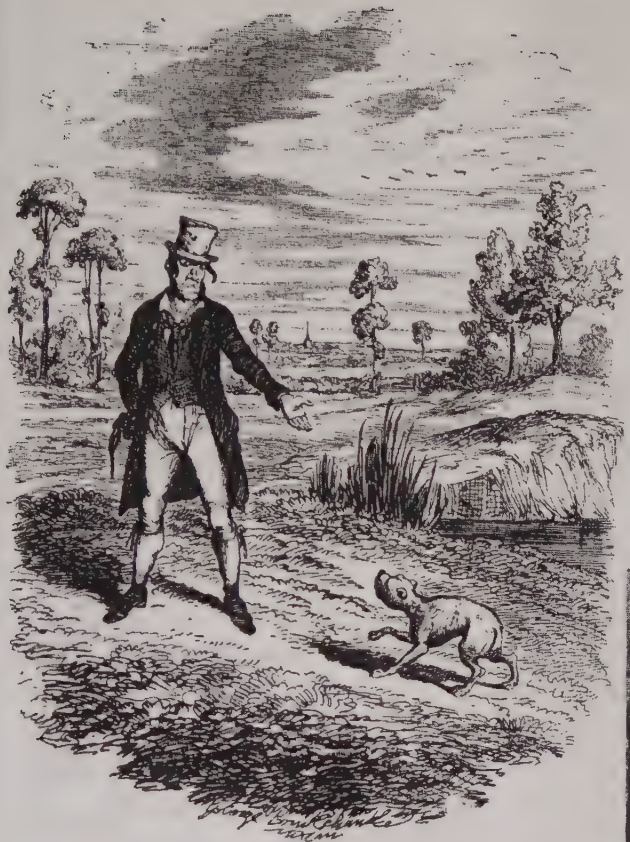
More completely than in most cases, Thackeray's great book represents all his other books. In *Pendennis* he varied the fable, but hardly the moral; and the moral is again a query. He makes a realistic and representative youth pass himself through the two phases of innocence and experience, and be the victim first of calf-love and then of worldly match-making. And we are haunted with the same question about his first more heroic folly; whether he was not better at the beginning and might not even have been better at the end. In *The Newcomes* he returns to the full fable of the fox and the lamb; only that

innocence is represented not by a young girl, but by an old soldier. To all these Thackerayan qualities must be added a natural appetite for the eighteenth century; with his humane scepticism and worldly wisdom he was very much of an eighteenth-century character. This taste led him to the *tour de force* of *Esmond;* in which he managed to write a whole realistic romance in the diction of Queen Anne. It is some ways the finest and certainly the most fastidious and dignified of his books; for its dignity really rises into tragedy. The sequel to it, *The Virginians,* is something of an anti-climax; and there appears in it a certain expansion of the method of gossip into mere garrulity. An element of delicate and disarming egoism has always run through his narrative, and it cannot be understood without some reference to the sentiment which flowed more and more freely towards the end, till it finally not only diluted but almost submerged the story.

The Man that was Thackeray

There is something highly picturesque about Thackeray's pose as a philosopher; his refrain of reflections like that of the chorus of a Greek play. But in a deeper sense we may well say that what was the matter with this philosopher was that he had no philosophy. The point is not indeed peculiar to him; but it is what makes him typical of many men of his time; it is what some of them meant when they said they were agnostics. His ultimate vision of things was vague rather than lucid. It is true that he loved a sort of lyrical meditation, in a literary sense very charming, upon his favourite motto of *Vanitas Vanitatum.* But though he often meditated upon it, it is by no means clear exactly what he meant by it. There are two alternative things that men generally mean when they say they have found all the world vanity. One is that they believe so ecstatically in the worth of something beyond the world they see, that this world is comparatively worthless. The other is that they believe in

nothing beyond the world they see, and find that world intrinsically worthless. They are the direct contrary of each other, like many people who say the same thing. To the first sort of man the colours of paradise are so vivid that against them green grass looks grey or red roses brown; to the other all possible colours are prejudged as colourless. The former only dismiss this life because it is short; that is, because there is so little of it; but by his very doctrine of the soul he obviously wants more of it. The latter is intrinsically weary of life, and would presumably be still wearier of immortality. Now Thackeray was certainly neither of these things; he did not go to the extreme either of the pietist or the pessimist. He certainly did not think of this life, with its good dinners and good friends, as a thing to be sacrificed to some supernatural certainty; but neither did he think that a good dinner was not worth eating or a good friend not worth having; he was the very last man in the world to think either. Like most of the Victorians, he was reverent even when he was not religious. But like most of the Victorians also, he was cheerful even when he was not happy. If he had only the vague Victorian faith, he had the whole of the vague Victorian hope; and above all, the most sincere belief in the rather vague Victorian charity. This nineteenth-century mood was as far as possible both from the higher and the lower madness; the moods of the martyr and the suicide. For it was almost the definition of its view that we know nothing about life except that it is worth living. The connection of this creed with a cry that all is vanity is really not at all clear. It will be found, I think, that this Thackerayan philosophy is almost the reverse of a philosophy. It is a sort of sentiment, among the hundred sentiments that float in constant mutability through the mind that is not cleared by any philosophy. As sentiments they are perfectly sane, even when they are most sentimental. The emotion or mood most common in the mind of Thackeray was the very healthy and humane one which is called up by light yet



SIKES ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY HIS DOG.—*Oliver Twist*

From the drawing by George Cruikshank

A typical example of George Cruikshank's illustrations of Dickens's characters. Cruikshank, together with "Phiz," Seymour, Maclise, and others, drew the original illustrations for Dickens's works.

Of late years we have had illustrations to Dickens perhaps more in accordance with present-day tastes, but to many Dickens lovers the work of the original artists must remain the only appropriate conception of the immortal characters.

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MR. MICAWBER

After the drawing by F. G. Lewin

Dickens, in *David Copperfield*, describes Micawber as "A stout middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes, with more hair upon his head (which was a large one, and very shiny) than there is upon an egg."

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A SCENE FROM THACKERAY'S "VANITY FAIR"

After the illustration in colour by Lewis Baumer.

A further episode in Becky's campaign with Jos. in which we leave the latter "seated *tête-à-tête* with a young lady, looking at her with a most killing expression."

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A SCENE FROM THACKERAY'S "VANITY FAIR"

After the illustration in colour by Lewis Baumer.

Becky and Amelia go down to dinner on the first evening of the vacation. Thrilled at the prospect of meeting Amelia's brother Jos whom she had not yet seen, Becky "was so agitated at the drawing-room door that she could hardly find courage to enter."

melancholy music and by the memories of our youth. This is not philosophy in the sense of detached thought or disinterested thought. But it is the proof that there is such a thing as disinterested emotion. There are, especially in later life, feelings that float unattached to anything or anybody, and which are yet not only feelings but affections; if they are almost impersonal affections.

Indeed, Thackeray does make of the moral affections, to use the phrase of Maeterlinck, a sort of treasure of the humble. Perhaps the nearest parallel in letters to what Thackeray did really mean, or rather feel, about the vanity of things, may be found in those magnificent lines beginning "The glories of our blood and state." And Shirley might almost have been thinking of such things as the simplicity of the Dobbins and Tom Newcomes of Thackeray's fiction, when he ended upon that quiet note:

> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

It is sometimes assumed that caricaturists like Dickens deal in types and realists like Thackeray in individuals. But indeed there may be two words about that; and there is another side or at least another aspect of the question. After reading several books by Thackeray at a stretch, there is really, much more of an impression that the human race runs into types, even though they are undoubtedly real types. After reading several books by Dickens at a stretch, there is really much more impression that the possibilities of permutation are infinite, and that new and unexpected people may turn up the next minute. Thackeray much more than Dickens had the tendency to repeat himself. But it must be said with the assumption that he had the right to repeat himself, in the sense that history repeats itself. But fancy never repeats itself. In this way the creations of Dickens were more unique, and in that sense more individual. Perhaps there was never a Quilp in real life; but there was never

another Quilp even in Dickens. He is as much a monstrosity in that world of fiction as he would be in the world of fact. When Dickens wants to make another villain he makes a totally different sort of villain, at least in externals; a sketch like Carker or a sketch like Uriah Heep. But at the end of a study of Thackeray we are conscious of a type of villain even though it is a true type; we have met Captain Blackball when he was passing under the name of Mr. Deuceace; we have known Mr. Brand Firmin under the shabbier disguise of Mr. Hooker Walker. Thackeray does suggest, in a way that is wonderfully suggestive, a world that is swarming with Blackballs and Hooker Walkers.

As a realist he is right, for no doubt it is. But nobody can say that Dickens suggests a world that is swarming with Quilps and Heeps. As with the mediæval mason, the gargoyles at the corners of his tower are all different; and he never carves the same chimera twice. I am not urging this difference between the great novelists as a matter of superior merit in either; as a matter of fact it implies the highest merit in both. The whole burden of Thackeray is truly a sort of refrain, saying that the world is round and all things return at last. The whole inspiration of Dickens is to the effect that nature is new and inexhaustible, and that imagination is even more full of future surprises. But the distinction can truly be noted and repeated—that the ultimate effect of the Thackerayan view of life tends more to a classification of types than does the Dickensian; and this is still true if we choose to state it in the form that one only had the poetry and the other the science of human nature. Thackeray's individuals, even when real individuals, do turn into types; because there are so many such individuals. Dickens's types do turn into individuals, because nobody else could imagine such types. Dickens himself did not attempt to imagine one of them again.

The lack of real philosophy, already noted, will be found important later on. Traditions become prejudices when they

are without a philosophy. Thackeray, even more than Dickens, was in some ways rather too English an Englishman. If there was one thing of which he was prouder even than of criticising the world as a sage, it was of knowing the world as a traveller. But though he did in one way know the world, it was only too much as a traveller; sometimes, one is compelled to say, as a tourist. But Thackeray really is the insular Englishman, who is never so insular as when he is sitting in a café in the very heart of the Continent. His queer and rabid irritation against the Irish was not only insular but provincial. He had the fundamental assumption that the English gentleman is the standard of all things; and he may have seen men and cities, but he had never seen citizens.

There follows on Thackeray a series that is not truly chronological, but is none the less historical. For taking up the tendencies of the time, more or less where the Thackeray of *Vanity Fair* had left them, we find two things happening. Perhaps it would be more true to say that in one case something happens and in the other case nothing happens. On one side Victorian England continued its negative demand to be that paradise of the legends, the happy country that has no history. We might rather say that instead of one public history, it had a thousand private histories. But they were the histories of families rather than the histories of cities or nations; and the feeling about them was expressed in fiction rather than in literal record. Of this Victorian world we may say that literature retired into private life.

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XXXI

THE VICTORIAN NOVELISTS

THE VICTORIAN NOVELISTS

§ 1

Anthony Trollope

THE domestic note, evident both in the splendidly human stories of Dickens and the gentlemanly novels of Thackeray, is also the note of the writings of Anthony Trollope. Like Thackeray, Trollope was interested in "good families." He went to both Harrow and Winchester, and, for many years, he was a responsible official in the Post Office. He belonged to the governing class. He was a mighty fox-hunter. He had inside knowledge of upper-class society in London as well as of the life, the very exclusive life, of English cathedral cities. In addition, he inherited literary ability, his mother being also a successful novelist. Trollope is little read in these days and the majority of his novels are unknown to modern readers, but they have an historical as well as a literary interest, for the novelist accents the Victorian view of men and women, not as individuals concerned with their own souls and their individual problems, but as members of small well-bred circles, whose duty it was to fulfil their social duties and to respect the conventions and traditions. The family plays the same important part in Trollope's novels as it does in Thackeray's *The Newcomes*. As it is evident that man is of no importance to himself or to anyone else except in so far as he is a social being, there is a greater human interest in the Victorian influenced by obligations to his fellows than in the heroes and heroines of modern novels, who

are obsessed with the preposterous idea that any living creature can conceivably "live his own life." At the same time, it must be confessed that the Victorian obligations appear to us artificial and often absurd.

Trollope was a prolific writer. The development of the serial was a great opportunity for a man who regarded literature as a profession, demanding daily industry and the regular and machine-like production of "copy." Trollope unquestionably wrote too much, and though he was concerned with the truthful representation of English middle-class life his novels have none of the supremely successful realism of a Jane Austen.

He was born in 1815, and his first notable book, *The Warden,* was published when he was forty. Trollope's best work is in the series of novels called *The Chronicles of Barsetshire,* in which he studies life in a cathedral town and its neighbourhood. *The Warden,* the first of the series, has served as model for many a novel since on the theme of a quiet, sheltered society disturbed and swept away by the intrusion of modern energies. Its immediate sequel, *Barchester Towers,* is usually considered the finest of Trollope's work, and every novel-reader knows Bishop Proudie and his awesome wife; yet competent judges have given their praise also to the closing book of the series, *The Last Chronicle of Barsetshire.* There is hardly a finer love-story in the language.

The visitor to England can recognise still the world Trollope portrays, whereas he is not likely to come on a scene to make him think of Jane Austen. The reason is that Jane Austen gave us the intimate scenes of life, and Trollope excelled in portraying society in its public aspects. Almost as fine as the cathedral stories are his Parliamentary novels, still valued for their portrayal of official life as well as for their stories. In addition to his many novels Trollope wrote an excellent life of Thackeray. He died in 1882, and his autobiography was published in 1883.

§ 2

Edward Bulwer Lytton

If it be true that mankind may be divided into the drabs and the flamboyants, then Trollope was certainly a drab and Bulwer Lytton was a flamboyant. Lytton was a novelist, a dramatist, and a politician. His first novel, *Falkland,* was published when he was twenty-four, and he was made a baronet when he was thirty-two. He was an exponent of the insincere-posing Byronism, which could hardly avoid being ridiculous even when as in his case it was added to great ability. Lytton's second novel, *Pelham,* with its note of dandyism, roused the rugged wrath of Carlyle and was satirised in *Sartor Resartus.*

As a politician, Lytton changed his opinions—he began life as a Whig and finished as a Tory—and as a writer he had many moods. He wrote historical novels like *Rienzi, The Last of the Barons,* and *The Last Days of Pompeii,* which without the poetry of Scott or the fine drama of Dumas at his best are workmanlike and readable. He wrote domestic fiction in *The Caxtons.* He wrote terror stories like *Eugene Aram* and mystery stories in *A Strange Story* and *The Haunted and the Haunters,* far and away the most successful of all his fiction, and indeed one of the best mystery stories in the language. And in *The Coming Race* he anticipated Mr. H. G. Wells and drew a fantastic picture of the future. In addition he wrote plays—*The Lady of Lyons, Richelieu,* and *Money*—which, with all their highly coloured sentimentality, held the stage until the end of the Irving régime at the Lyceum.

Bulwer Lytton was Colonial Secretary in 1858, and was created Baron Lytton of Knebworth in 1866. He died in 1876.

§ 3

Benjamin Disraeli

If Lytton was flamboyant, Disraeli was super-flamboyant. Above all other things, Disraeli was a Jew, in his youth frankly

a Jewish adventurer, with a love for the gaudy and the over-coloured and a keen eye for the follies, the sins, and the weakness of the world in which he lived, but in which he lived an alien until the day of his death. Disraeli was brilliantly clever, perhaps the cleverest man who lived in Victorian England. His novels are theatrical, unreal, exaggerated, but they are always witty, filled with epigrams that are equal to the best of Oscar Wilde and Whistler. One wearies of the dukes and plutocrats, and the heavily scented luxury of the atmosphere of his stories, but the writing is always stimulating and amusing.

Disraeli wrote his first novel, *Vivian Grey,* when he was twenty-two. Before the beginning of his political career, he had written six other novels, of which, *Henrietta Temple,* a hectic love-story, and *Venetia,* founded on the life of Byron, are the most considerable. In the forties of last century he wrote *Coningsby, Sybil,* and *Tancred.* Two more novels were written at the end of his life, *Lothair* in 1870, and *Endymion* in 1880, when he was an old man of seventy-four.

Of all his novels, *Sybil* is the most interesting and the most important. In it Disraeli describes, with knowledge and sympathy, the sorry condition of the people of England at the end of the first stage of the industrial revolution, conditions that inspired the ideals of the Young England party—dreams of an aristocracy rescuing the poor from their middle-class oppressors —and afterwards impelled the pious Tory, Lord Shaftsbury, to spend his life in the long fight to pass the Factory Acts. *Sybil* is a real historical document, for despite its florid style it is a revelation of the life of the workers of the early nineteenth century, as *Piers Plowman* is a revelation of their life in the fourteenth century.

§ 4

Wilkie Collins

Wilkie Collins was a master of melodrama. There is, indeed, no better melodramatic novel in the English language than his

The Woman in White. In a sense Collins was a disciple of Dickens. He had something of the master's supreme power for creating character, but he was unconcerned with the social abuses which inspired Dickens with the righteous, cleansing laughter that created Bumble and Mr. Gradgrind. Wilkie was a story-teller, a careful, industrious teller of tales. It might almost be said that he was the first of the long line of writers of crime stories, and, though he has had a countless number of followers, few of them have equalled his *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone.*

It is interesting to calculate the number of familiar characters that the great English writers have given to the average English reader—Shakespeare and Dickens a legion, Scott and Thackeray perhaps half-a-dozen, Fielding, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy two or three. Wilkie Collins has given us at least one—Count Fosco, that large, fat, cold, and most consummate villain (copied a dozen times in recent fiction), and to have given the world one character to remember is no mean achievement.

Wilkie Collins was born in 1824 and died in 1889.

§ 5

Charles Reade

Charles Reade was ten years younger than Wilkie Collins. He was another example of Victorian enthusiastic industry and perfervid indignation against cruelty and injustice. Dickens's great discovery was that the best, perhaps indeed the only way to destroy evil is to make it ridiculous. Charles Reade did not possess the saving grace of humour. Evil, the persecution of the first offender and the brutal handling of the helpless imbecile, moved him to furious wrath, and, like one of the characters in Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's play, he "bashed away at the minxes." His honest righteous wrath finds its best literary expression in *It is Never Too Late To Mend,* a well-told story with a purpose.

There was a purpose in most of Reade's novels, but, like Wilkie Collins, he was a born story-teller.

His best book, *The Cloister and the Hearth,* was written when for once he forgot the wickedness of his own times. Its scene is the beginning of the Renaissance, and its theme is the life of the father of Erasmus. Allowing for the prejudices of a typically obstinate Victorian, *The Cloister and the Hearth* is an admirable example of the historical novel in which the atmosphere of a bygone age is successfully reproduced.

Reade was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and a barrister, though he never practised. He wrote many plays as well as novels, and his first literary success was made when he was forty with *Peg Woffington.* He died in 1884.

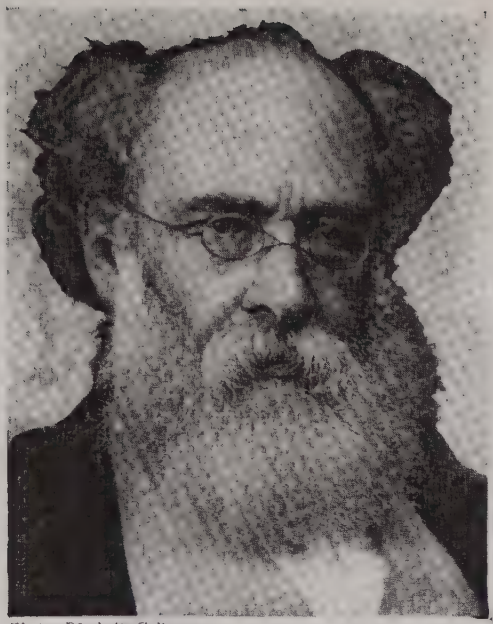
§ 6

Charles Kingsley

Charles Kingsley will always be remembered as the author of *Westward Ho!* that dramatic, prejudiced, utterly unhistoric story of Elizabethan England, which has had an immense influence in forming the characters of English boys, because, bad as Kingsley's history certainly was, his hero, Amyas Leigh, was a splendid manly man. With all its defects, *Westward Ho!* is one of the great English novels of adventure, and its vivid account of the defeat of the Spanish Armada remains an inspiration of patriotism.

Kingsley wrote two other historical novels, *Hypatia,* a story of Alexandria at the end of the Roman Empire, and *Hereward the Wake,* a tale of the hopeless war of the East Anglian Saxons against the Norman invaders.

Kingsley was a Christian Socialist, influenced by the social teachings of Ruskin, and his *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* are powerful demonstrations of the plight of the poor in the heyday of Victorian prosperity. He was another writer of striking versatility. He was a poet. His *Heroes* is a delightful book for boys, and his



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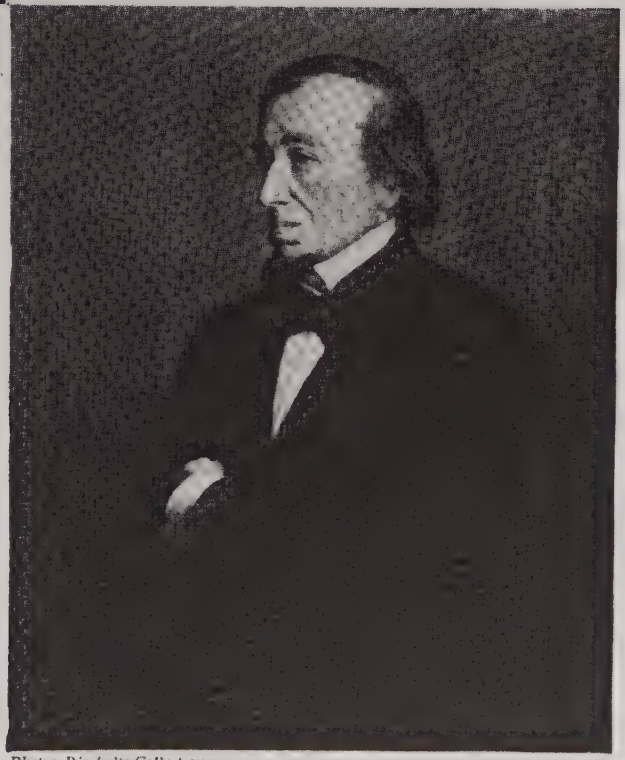
ANTHONY TROLLOPE

One of the most prolific and methodical of English novelists.



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LORD BEACONSFIELD

From the painting by Millais.

Novelist before he was a statesman.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

THE SAINT'S TRAGEDY

ELIZABETH. "No creature now I love, but God alone—
Lo, here I strip me of all earthly helps,
Naked and barefoot through the world to follow
My naked Lord."

The Saint's Tragedy, ACT IV SCENE I

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

The Water Babies is still one of the best books for a nursery library.

For many years Charles Kingsley was the Rector of Eversley in Hampshire. Afterwards he was Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and a Canon of Westminster. Perhaps the greatest mistake of his life was a famous controversy with Cardinal Newman, in which he certainly came off second best. He was born in 1819 and died in 1875. His brother, Henry, the author of *Ravenshoe,* was also a novelist of distinction.

Kingsley's best work as a poet is to be found in the Ballads, that have the fine manliness of *Westward Ho!* and there is charm and sympathy in the well-known *The Sands of Dee:*

"O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee";
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see.
The rolling mist came down and hid the land;
And never home came she.

"Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
A tress of golden hair,
A drownèd maiden's hair
Above the nets at sea?
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes on Dee."

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel crawling foam,
The cruel hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea:
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee.

§ 7

The Brontës

In 1846 a volume of poems was published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, the pen-names of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, the daughters of a Yorkshire clergyman. Charlotte, the eldest sister, was born in 1816. The Brontës were of Irish extraction. Their means were limited, their home was bleak and dreary, and they were all sickly and what is nowadays called "temperamental." Charlotte Brontë was, indeed, a thoroughly unhappy young woman. Her life was uneventful. Her school-days were miserable. She was for a time a governess, and hated the experience. She escaped from Yorkshire for a while to live in Brussels, and, when she was thirty-eight, she married one of her father's curates. She died in 1855.

The character of Charlotte Brontë has an unusual literary importance because her novels are all largely autobiographical, the transcription of her own experience and her own dissatisfaction. Most fiction is to some extent autobiographical, and most novelists who have been at all prolific have written at least one book based on the incidents of their own lives. *David Copperfield* is what may be called seasoned autobiography, fiction certainly founded on fact, and Mr. Wells, to mention one modern example, appears as a character in several of his novels. But the novelist of genius generally has the power to appreciate the motives and the characters of persons entirely different from himself, and possesses a catholic interest in human endeavour, in human struggle, and in human failure. Charlotte Brontë never saw beyond the end of her own nose. Her vision was as narrow as her life.

The book of poems was not a success, and all three sisters, eager for expression and for escape from their depressing environment, turned their minds to the writing of fiction. Charlotte's first novel, *The Professor,* was returned to the author by publisher after publisher, and it was only after some hesitation that her second book, *Jane Eyre,* was published by Messrs.

Smith, Elder in 1847. It was an immediate and unqualified success. Thackeray praised it, and the daughter of the dour Yorkshire rector became at once a famous writer. She published only two other novels, *Shirley* in 1849 and *Villette* in 1852. Both these novels are transcriptions of phases of her own experience. Her sister Emily is the chief figure in *Shirley,* which also contains bitter pictures of her father's curates. *Villette* is the story of her life in Brussels.

Charlotte Brontë's small output is in striking contrast to the prodigality of her great contemporaries. The amazing creative power of Dickens was the result of his boundless sympathy and interest in life. Charlotte Brontë had no such impetus to creation, and Professor Saintsbury is probably justified in his suggestion that even if she had lived longer, she would have written little more.

Her fame depends on one novel, *Jane Eyre.* The early chapters are the record of her sufferings as a schoolgirl and as a governess. The latter part of the novel, the love-story of Jane and the masterful Rochester, is realistic romance. There is nothing flamboyant about Jane. She is entirely drab, but Rochester falls in love with this plain, little practical woman as men, if they are wise, generally prefer the drab woman to the flamboyant. Its insistence on this fact, always denied by the romantics, gives *Jane Eyre* its value. It is curious to note that, when it was written, *Jane Eyre* was regarded by the prim Victorians as rather daring and improper. To us it is a very model of propriety.

Mr. Chesterton has said that

> Charlotte Brontë embodies a contrast which is at least a curiosity of literature. It is expressed even externally in the image of the demure governess who passes through such a tempestuous scene to the hiding-place of a maniac. But the contrast was psychological and innate. Her consciousness was in many ways Puritanical and even prim, while her subconsciousness was a sea of passion; or she might be com-

pared to a Baptist chapel built on a volcano. But the contrast was none the less a character illustrating the Victorian conditions; and only to be understood by a comprehension of these conditions. The paradox of Victorianism was that it actually had liberty, through not having enlargement. It was a local liberty, and in her might sometimes be called almost a parochial anarchy.

There is nothing distinguished in the literary work of Anne Brontë, whose novel *Agnes Grey* is interesting only as the work of a famous woman's sister, but Emily Brontë was unquestionably a writer of genius. Her one novel, *Wuthering Heights*, is a gloomy masterpiece.

Mr. Chesterton says of *Wuthering Heights:*

> It is a wonderful effect of stark imagination, without humility or humour or anything that could humanise so inhuman a vision. But so far as that story is concerned, the case is still the same as that of her sister; it is a local and almost secret liberation. It is as if it were meant to show that this small island yet contains moorlands large enough for a great wind to lose itself at will. But there was another side of Emily Brontë which appears in her poems, which suggests that she had in some rugged individual way found a philosophy more suited to such elemental emotions than the rather panic-stricken Protestantism, which her sister guarded so jealously in her bewildering Belgian experiences in *Villette*. Emily Brontë had a sort of stoical pantheism or nature-worship, such as has often been the religion of such proud and unhappy human beings in European history; and that very fact links her a little more, if unconsciously, with the more conscious European culture.

Emily Brontë's poems reflect even more of her own inner life. Matthew Arnold wrote of her as one

> whose soul
> Knew no fellow for might,
> Passion, vehemence, grief,
> Daring, since Byron died;

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

CHARLOTTE BRONTË, BY GEORGE RICHMOND
National Portrait Gallery, London.
One of the great Victorian women novelists.

Photo. Rischgitz Collection.

GEORGE ELIOT, BY SIR F. W. BURTON
National Portrait Gallery, London
The blue-stocking author of *Adam Bede.*

Photo W. A. Mansell & Co. *By permission of the Corporation of Blackburn*

HETTY SORREL

From the painting by the Hon. J. Collier in the Blackburn Art Gallery

The unfortunate Hetty Sorrel in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* is the victim of one of the tragedies of life. The distraught girl, having left her unwanted child in a wood, returns later to find it dead. Stricken with horror, she flees from the spot only to be arrested and sentenced to death, a sentence commuted at the last moment to transportation.

and time leaves this verdict as yet untouched. Here it is possible to represent her poetry only by her poignant and valorous *Last Lines* which Swinburne accounted to be as worthy of "reverent remembrance" as any last words of "poet, or hero, or sage, or saint."

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere;
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O, God, within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts; unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

§ 8

Mrs. Gaskell

Mrs. Gaskell, the friend and biographer of Charlotte Brontë, was born in 1810, and married in 1832. Her first success was made with *Mary Barton,* in which, with something of Disraeli's

horror of the dark side of Victorian industrialism, she paints a realistic picture of life in a northern manufacturing town. *Cranford,* published five years later, is Mrs. Gaskell's most considerable achievement. Its pleasant pages, with their description of nineteenth-century domestic life, might almost have been written by Jane Austen, if one can imagine Jane without her irony and with a far greater sympathy. Mrs. Gaskell died in 1865 after a singularly happy life.

§ 9

George Eliot

"In the novelist known as George Eliot," writes Mr. Chesterton, "the contemporary culture and emancipation becomes entirely conscious." She is distinguished at first sight from the great novelists already considered by the fact that the free thought has come to the surface, even if some would feel that it became more superficial even in coming to the surface. She certainly did possess a philosophy; eventually we might say that the philosophy possessed her. But her progress is itself an illustration of what has been suggested here; that the free controversies of the Continent filtered slowly through a sort of Victorian veil or web into England; and that many things were unconscious and elemental before they became conscious and ethical.

George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) was born in 1819, and the first thirty years of her life were spent in the Midlands. Her agnosticism was shown by the fact that her first literary work was a translation of Strauss's very German *Life of Jesus.* She was for a time on the staff of the liberal *Westminster Review,* her contributions including reviews and translations of other German sceptical essays. Mary Ann Evans was as plain as she was learned, and in his autobiography Herbert Spencer naïvely records that, though the thought of marriage with her had occurred to him, he was deterred from making a proposal because, philosopher though he was, a certain measure of good looks was

essential to him in a woman. George Henry Lewes, the critic, was less affected by beauty. He and Miss Evans became intimate friends and lived together until his death in 1878. She afterwards married a Mr. Cross, and died in 1880.

The pen-name George Eliot, was first used when *The Scenes of Clerical Life* appeared serially in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1857. Her next and perhaps her greatest book, *Adam Bede,* was published in the next year. In it George Eliot used her intimate knowledge of the rural life of Warwickshire, writing of its people with almost a Dickens sympathy and humour. Mrs. Poyser is indeed the one character created by her that has something like immortality. The Midlands are the scene of her two next novels, *The Mill on the Floss,* published in 1860, and *Silas Marner,* published in 1861.

The second phase of George Eliot's career, covering the years from 1863 to 1871, saw the publication of *Romola, Felix Holt,* and *Middlemarch. Romola* is a story of the Italian Renaissance, containing an acute and interesting demonstration of the havoc wrought by weakness of character. *Felix Holt* is a tale of Victorian Radicalism, and *Middlemarch,* obviously largely autobiographical in spirit though not in incidents, is a study of nineteenth-century "advanced" feminism. These three novels had an immense popularity when they were published, but they are not to be compared in genuine human interest with the novels of the first period. The atmosphere of philosophy and science, in which George Eliot lived, a hopeless atmosphere for any artist, had its result in *Daniel Deronda,* published in 1876. This is, without question, the dullest of all George Eliot's novels, in these days almost unreadable. *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* appeared in the year before her death.

Summarising George Eliot's novels Mr. Chesterton says:

> *The Mill on the Floss* was a more or less straightforward and convincing study of the relations of brother and

sister, and *Romola* a plausible historical novel, and a story whose central stalk is the broken reed of one weak character; but even in these we seem to have horrible hints of various metaphysical views on the Will, its strength in Tulliver or its weakness in Tito. *Felix Holt* is already too serious to be true, though even here there are the remains of real humour, clinging to his mother. The last novel of all, *Daniel Deronda,* admittedly shows analysis changing into dissolution. Dickens and Thackeray each left an unfinished novel, and George Eliot left a novel that is too much finished. Moreover, when that was finished she was finished; her particular rationalistic mental process could go no further. But before she came to this final point she had written one book, the last but one, which was also perhaps the greatest; if only because it unconsciously mirrored the history of her own mind. *Middlemarch* describes the disappointment of a serious girl who married a scholar in the hope of helping in a great work, and finds she has to work in a very hole-and-corner way after all; for his scholarship and his temper are equally rusty. We might almost say that it has the sad moral that duty can deceive as well as pleasure.

George Eliot was the author of much verse, admirable in sentiment, but without any poetic value. Perhaps her best remembered lines are:

> Our deeds still follow from afar,
> And what we have been makes us what we are.

The lesser Victorian novelists include Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901), the author of *The Heir of Redclyffe* and *The Daisy Chain* and over a hundred other stories, who was greatly influenced by Keble and the Oxford Movement and, in an odd way, influenced William Morris, Burne-Jones, and the Pre-Raphaelites; Mrs. Oliphant (1828-97), a voluminous writer who has been called a feminine Trollope, and whose two best remembered novels are *Salem Chapel* and *A Son of the Soil;* and Mark

Rutherford (1831-1913), a novelist, deserving far greater popularity than he has ever had, whose novels really describe Victorian nonconformity, and one of whose books, *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane,* is a masterpiece of fiction.

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Anthony Trollope's Autobiography.

T. H. S. Escott's *Anthony Trollope, his Work, Associates, and Literary Originals.*

BULWER LYTTON:

There are various editions of the following: *Last Days of Pompeii, Last of the Barons, Harold, Rienzi.*

DISRAELI, LORD BEACONSFIELD:

Disraeli's novels, including *Contarini Fleming, Vivian Grey, Tancred, Sybil, Henrietta Temple, Venetia, Lothair, Endymion,* are published in English and American editions.

W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle's *Life of Disraeli,* in 6 vols.

WILKIE COLLINS:

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CHARLES READE:

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THE BRONTËS:

The Haworth Edition of the works of the Brontë Sisters, contains seven volumes as follows: *Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette,* by Charlotte Brontë. *The Professor,* by Charlotte Brontë, and *Poems* by Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Patrick Brontë (1 vol.). *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, and *Agnes Grey* by Anne Brontë (1 vol.). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* by Anne Brontë. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë,* by Mrs. Gaskell.

Most of the Brontë novels can be obtained in various cheap editions.

Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlottë Brontë.*

Clement K. Shorter's *The Brontës and their Circle.*

Augustine Birrell's *Charlotte Brontë.*

A. C. Swinburne's *A Note on Charlotte Brontë.*

The Complete Poems of Anne Brontë, edited by Clement Shorter.

Poems, Selections from the Poetry of Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Branwell Brontë, edited by A. C. Benson.

See the chapter on Emily Brontë in Maeterlinck's *Wisdom and Destiny.*

MRS. GASKELL:

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Mrs. E. H. Chadwick's *Mrs. Gaskell, Haunts, Homes, and Stories.*

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MRS. J. H. EWING:

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XXXII

THE NEW ENGLAND WRITERS

THE NEW ENGLAND WRITERS

AFTER the death of Bunyan, the Puritan spirit found no considerable expression in English literature for nearly a century and a half. In England the seventeenth century was a religious century, and the eighteenth eminently irreligious. Apart from the writings of John Wesley, who although not a Calvinist, was a Puritan in so far as Puritanism may be defined as "spiritual individualism," there was nothing that can be called Puritan literature produced in eighteenth-century England, and the Puritan spirit cannot be said to have again inspired literature until the appearance of the American Puritan writers of the nineteenth century.

The Puritan Spirit

New England was colonised by Puritan exiles from England, and though the strict letter of Calvinist theology may have been abandoned, the influence of the Puritan spirit not only continued a hundred years ago, but continues to-day, and had spread westward from New England to the Pacific coast. There is no trace of Puritanism in the two supremely great nineteenth-century American writers—Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman. But Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the other transcendentalists, and Longfellow, Whittier, and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, may all be accurately described as Puritan writers.

§ 1

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston in 1803. He entered Harvard in 1817, earning his living while he was a student as a waiter and in other such humble tasks. In 1828 he was ordained as a minister and appointed chaplain of the Massachusetts Senate. After three years he resigned his pastorate owing to the loss of his orthodox faith, and paid his first visit to England, where he met Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. He published his first book, *Nature,* in 1836. In the next year he delivered his famous address, *The American Scholar.* A volume of essays was published in 1841, and another in 1844. He was in England again in 1847 and 1848, and this last visit gave him his materials for his *English Traits,* which was published in 1856, six years after the publication of *Representative Men. The Conduct of Life* was published in 1860. Emerson died in 1882.

Emerson has been described as "the most shining intellectual glory and the most potent intellectual force of a continent." The Transcendentalists, the small intellectual Boston coterie that was formed in 1836, and of which Emerson and Thoreau were the two most distinguished members, was a revolt against Calvinistic theology and a stimulus to philanthropy, which led to the national movement for the abolition of slavery. The Transcendentalists indulged in many extravagancies, in which, however, Emerson had no part. He was always eminently sane and moderate. It was a long time, indeed, before he became an Abolitionist, and it was not until 1856 that he declared: "I think we must get rid of slavery or we shall get rid of freedom." When the Civil War began, however, he became an enthusiastic supporter of Lincoln and his policy. He was a man of many limitations. It has been said of him that he loved man, but that he was not fond of men. He was a considerable poet as well as an essayist, and he loved the poetry of Shakespeare, Dante, George Herbert, and Cole-

ridge. But Shelley said nothing to him. He seldom read novels, and was bored by Cervantes, Scott, Jane Austen, and Dickens.

Despite his intellectual affinity with many English writers, despite his close association with Carlyle and others of his English contemporaries, Emerson was essentially an American and, for all his heterodoxy, an American Puritan, holding the belief expressed by that other American, Jonathan Edwards, when he said: "God and real existence are the same. God is and there is none else."

The present generation is apt to regard Emerson as a teacher in the clouds, a transcendentalist too far from earth. But there is infinite wisdom in his packed sentences and often an astonishing beauty of expression—he is always suggestive, always inspiring.

As an example both of Emerson's philosophy and the brilliant style of his writing, the following extract may be quoted from the essay on "Self-Reliance":

> Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark. . . . .
>
> Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. . . .
>
> A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,

adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day. "Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood." Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. . . .

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. Let us never bow and apologise more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events.

Emerson was a happy, cheerful man, enjoying the love and popularity that was given to him in no stinted measure. Carlyle once said, "It's a very striking and curious spectacle to behold a man in these days so confidently cheerful as Emerson." But Emerson was compared by Matthew Arnold to Marcus Aurelius, and to a man akin to the great emperor-philosopher the way of virtue could never seem easy and the road to life must always be hard and narrow. Emerson once said, here echoing Carlyle: "It is in vain to make a paradise but for good men," and in one of his poems he writes:

Though love repine and reason chafe,
There came a voice without reply:—
'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die.

He finished his life as tranquilly and as cheerfully as he had lived it, and it is interesting to compare Henley's fierce and, for all its emphasis, half doubting assertion:

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul,

with Emerson's:

I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unharmed:
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed.

English Traits

Emerson's *English Traits* is, for English readers, the most interesting thing that he ever wrote. It is witty, as for instance when he says: "The Frenchman invented the ruffle, the Englishman added the shirt." It is instinct with observation, as for instance when he asserts that "the English are a nation of humorists," a fact which the rest of Europe has discovered only within the last ten years. For other nations his best work is to be found in *Nature,* his first book, in the First and Second Series of the *Essays,* and in the great *Conduct of Life.* If Emerson was a Puritan, the word must be defined so broadly that we can account for his influence on Walt Whitman, Matthew Arnold, Nietzsche, and Maeterlinck, four men of no obvious resemblance to each other. The fact is that Emerson was unusually noble in

spirit, unusually intelligent about human nature, and fine men and women everywhere have prized the society of his genius without considering too closely whether they agreed with all his ideas.

Malvolio's words, in *Twelfth Night,* "I think nobly of the soul," is almost a summary of Ralph Waldo Emerson's attitude to the mysteries of life. He thought nobly of the soul; but with opinions, with answers to questions, with debating-society propositions and conclusions, he had little to do. He once said, "I do not wish for disciples." In a sense he has none, for he gave out no body of doctrine for the many; he galvanised the individual. As Dr. Richard Garnett wrote in his admirable little *Life:* "More than any other of the great writers of the age, he is a Voice. He is almost impersonal. He is pure from the taint of sect, clique, or party. He does not argue, but announces." And, as he did not know, he does not tell us what the soul is. He says:

> What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect it is genius; when it breathes through his will it is virtue; when it flows through his affection it is love. . . . All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us; in other words to engage us to obey.

He flashed out these things because he believed them in his depths: but he announced, he did not argue. He held that the scholar of life is a dispassionate reporter, not a partisan, and that if his report to himself seems true he can but accept it. "To him no disputes can attach, he is invulnerable. The vulgar think he would found a sect and be installed and made much of. He knows better, and much prefers his melons and his woods."

Emerson believed that the soul is our best pulpit—above all our real link with God. "Ineffable is the union of man and God

in every act of the soul. The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God. . . . How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments. . . . Revering the soul, and learning, as the ancient said, that 'its beauty is immense,' man . . . will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity." Thus did Emerson turn from doctrine and programme and formal beliefs to the inner life, reached in solitude, and in the presence of Nature, where the soul, he believed, found "the music and pictures of the most ancient religion."

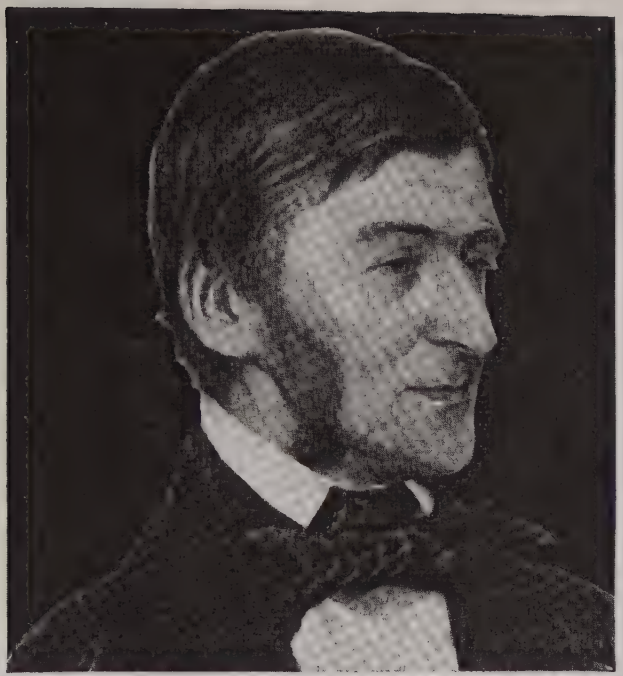
§ 2

Nathaniel Hawthorne

It is easy to think of Hawthorne as a Puritan, and hasty readers in our time have spoken of him as the chronicler of the Puritan past in New England. He really is a critic of Puritanism, as in a sense Emerson was. He was also a critic of the ideas Emerson stood for, and indeed, if because of his ancestry he should be called a Puritan, he reminds us that the great figures in that tradition, at least so far as America is concerned, were men not of a docile temperament, but of vigorous, enquiring, independent and even rebellious minds. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 4, 1804, was graduated from Bowdoin College in the same class with Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, later President of the United States, was employed in the Boston Custom House, 1839-1841, and at the Salem Custom House, 1846-1850; President Pierce appointed him consul at Liverpool, 1853-1857; he lived in Italy from 1857 to 1859, and in the Berkshires, Massachusetts, until his death, May 18, 1864. Uneventful on the whole though his life was, the most important and in a sense the most exciting part of it was in the years from 1825 to 1837, when he lived alone in his Salem home, with no companions but his books and his thoughts, and worked on his short stories

and sketches. He gives an account of this most important period of his life in his two sketches, *The Devil in Manuscript,* and *The Journal of a Solitary Man.* Some of his stories were published from time to time in Goodrich's annual, *The Token,* and in *The New England Magazine;* they were collected in *Twice Told Tales,* 1837 (enlarged edition in two volumes, 1842). Other collections of his essays and stories were *Mosses from an Old Manse,* 1846, and *The Snow Image,* 1852. In this part of his writing his genius is well defined, and the critic of the later romances is tempted to illustrate practically all his mature qualities from conveniently short passages in the early work. The four great romances belong to the later part of his life—*The Scarlet Letter,* 1850, *The House of the Seven Gables,* 1851, *The Blithedale Romance,* 1852, and after his experiences abroad, *The Marble Faun,* 1860.

Hawthorne writes about the past, and he is profoundly interested in ethical questions; for that reason he is sometimes dismissed with a phrase—he is "a Puritan romancer." But he is rather an American writer, in that he represents the past always at the moment when it is breaking up; and if he studies the old problem of sin, it is to ask whether some forms of conduct called sin may not after all be innocent or even virtuous, and whether some popular virtues may not be, in some cases at least, great wrongs. In *The Scarlet Letter* he shows the results of a sin on three characters, and the two chief sinners turn out to be saints, or nearly so, but the injured husband becomes a devil. We are made to feel, though we may not translate our feelings into ideas, that it was a greater sin for the old husband to marry the young girl who did not love him than for her to love the young minister. In *The Marble Faun* the story is of a man who had no soul until he committed a murder; then through remorse he develops a spiritual life. Can sin, then, be a doorway to virtue? If these ideas are Puritanical, we have much misunderstood the Puritans.



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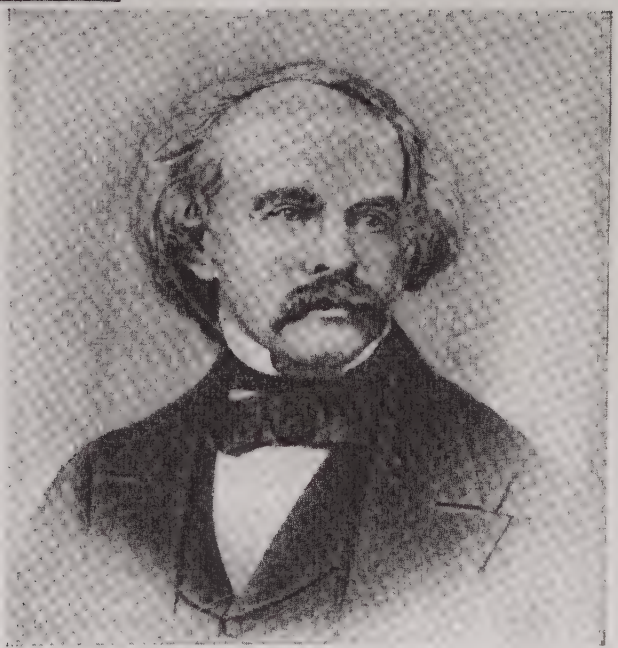
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

From an original drawing by Samuel W. Rowse.

The New England Philosopher.



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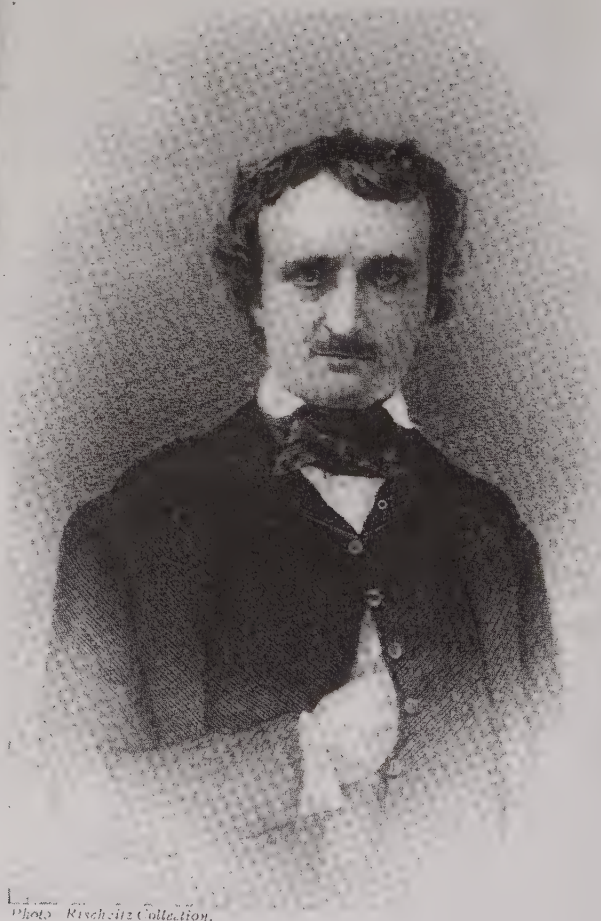
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

The author of *Tanglewood Tales.*

Photo Rischgitz Collection

HENRY W LONGFELLOW

The famous New England poet.



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EDGAR ALLAN POE

The author of *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*

The fact is that Hawthorne, like Emerson, is far more radical than he seems; his beautiful and traditional manners obscure at first the adventurous and questioning elements in his thoughts. He was skeptical of Puritanism; he was skeptical also of Transcendentalism, even in so free a nature as Emerson's. Where the Transcendentalist held that there was compensation for our actions in the actions themselves—that a good deed carries its reward with it and a bad deed its punishment, Hawthorne preferred to tell the story of *The House of the Seven Gables,* where the innocent man goes to jail, and his loyal sister grows old, crabbed, and sensitive waiting for him to come out. Like Thoreau, he had a much stronger head than most of the Transcendental circle, and like Thoreau he seems only a chance visitor among them, after all. His beautiful art spoke for the America that broods and thinks—for an audience, therefore, that will be larger after the distractions of our industrialism have died down.

§ 3

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The most famous of the American Puritan poets is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. His popularity amongst simple folk has been won by the moral fervour, essentially Puritan in its form, of such poems as *The Village Blacksmith, Excelsior,* and *A Psalm of Life.* Probably no verses are better known than Longfellow's:

Lives of great men all remind us
  We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
  Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints, that perhaps another,
  Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
  Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

Longfellow was born at Portland, Maine, in February, 1807. He was at college with Hawthorne, and after he had graduated he went to Europe for three years, studying in Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. After another trip to Europe in 1835, during which his first wife died in Holland, he was appointed a professor at Harvard, where he held a chair for eighteen years. Longfellow died in 1882. He was a simple gentle-hearted man, profoundly affected by German sentimentality. His life was easy and uneventful, its only outstanding event being the tragic death of his second wife by burning. Longfellow would not have attached any meaning (it probably has none) to the phrase "art for art's sake." He believed as fully as Mr. Wells that literature was a means to an end, the end in his case being the inculcation of Puritan morality. He was nearly always didactic, nearly always sentimental, sometimes a little silly. But though his poetry may not be of the greatest, his faith was steady and unquestioning:

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call Death.

"The Golden Legend"

Evangeline, published in 1847, gave Longfellow an unchallengeable place among the writers in his own country. *The Golden Legend,* published in 1851, founded on a German poem, is perhaps his most considerable achievement; and *Hiawatha,* with its drama, its humour, and its novel versification, is at least facile and interesting folklore. In the later years of his life Longfellow made one of the best English translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy.* Longfellow as a poet was handicapped by his limita-

tion of experience and to some extent by his facility. He wrote too easily, but sometimes he wrote admirably well, as in the two famous lines:

> I heard the trailing garments of the night
> Sweep through her marble halls.

Longfellow has been a great "awakener" of the love of poetry in the young. He has been the genial and inspiring doorkeeper of the temple. His easy and satisfying rhythm, his rich yet simple suggestions of things venerable and picturesque, and a certain unction in all he wrote, combine to make his works the very tuck-shop of poetry for young readers. Which of us does not remember with gratitude and recovered joy the moments when he first read these lines?—

> In the ancient town of Brugés,
> In the quaint old Flemish city,
> As the evening shades descended,
> Low and loud and sweetly blended,
> Low at times and loud at times,
> And changing like a poet's rhymes,
> Rang the beautiful wild chimes
> From the Belfry in the market
> Of the ancient town of Brugés.

These lines give to a young dreamer just his own kind of thought, his own kind of mood, and as much magical expression as he needs or can receive. Gently they watered our imagination, sweetly they confirmed our deepening vision of the world. But Longfellow has lines for many other moods of the young. How our souls were stirred to read:

> And King Olaf heard the cry,
> Saw the red light in the sky,
> Laid his hand upon his sword,
> And he leaned upon the railing,
> And his ships went sailing, sailing,
> Northward into Drontheim fiord.

There he stood as one who dreamed;
And the red light glanced and gleamed
  On the armour that he wore;
And he shouted, as the rifted
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,
  "I accept thy challenge, Thor!"

. . . . . .

Norway never yet had seen
One so beautiful of mien,
  One so royal in attire,
When in arms completely furnished
Harness gold-inlaid and burnished,
  Mantle like a flame of fire.

Thus came Olaf to his own,
When upon the night-wind blown
  Passed that cry along the shore;
And he answered, while the rifted
Streamers o'er him shook and shifted,
  "I accept thy challenge, Thor!"

Who, in mature years, has not repeated, with a sadder accent than of old, those simple words in another poem:

I stood on the bridge at midnight,
  As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose over the city
  Behind the dark church-tower.

. . . . . .

How often, O how often,
  In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
  And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, O how often,
  I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
  O'er the ocean wild and wide.

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THE SCARLET LETTER

FROM THE ILLUSTRATION BY HUGH THOMSON

In the opening sketch of Hawthorne's romance *The Scarlet Letter* Nathaniel Hawthorne gives a picture of the Puritan character and the attitude it assumed towards all those who failed to conform to the rigid standards of the God-fearing pioneers of New England.

The incident depicted above taken from *The Scarlet Letter* shows the infamous Hester Prynne standing on the scaffold with a letter 'A' embroidered in flaming scarlet on her bodice.

With her child in her arms she is led to the scaffold and stands veiled under the scornful gaze of the people. Before they had expected to see her crushed and ashamed but were disappointed to find that she was calm and even triumphant. Perceiving how her beauty [illegible] much a part of the punishment [illegible] which she had to endure.

§ 4

Poe holds a curious and individual place in literature. He was the pioneer of the detective story, he made unrelieved horror a theme for art, and he wrote a few poems that, in spite of imperfections, will live. An American, mingling in the social and literary life of American cities, he yet seemed to have no country save that created by his gloomy and restricted imagination.

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 18, 1809. His parents were actors. His mother was Elizabeth Arnold, who appears to have been a creditable actress and altogether of finer quality than her husband, who abandoned her at Richmond, Virginia. Her three children were adopted by sympathetic folk, Edgar being taken into the household of John Allan, a Scotchman, a wealthy tobacco merchant. He was then two years old.

He was in England with the Allans from 1815 to 1820, and was sent to the Manor House School, Stoke Newington, of which he has left an account (highly coloured and at the same time somewhat shadowy) in *William Wilson*. At seventeen he entered the University of Virginia, where he acquired a considerable knowledge of the classics and a taste for gambling. Allan, already sorely tried by Poe's extravagance, refused to pay his gambling debts, whereupon the delinquent vanished to Boston. Later, after a reconciliation with his guardian, he went to the West Point Military Academy. No man could have been less fitted for military duties and discipline than Poe. He so assiduously neglected his work that he was "sent down," with a taste for brandy and mathematics. At West Point he wrote some of the verse which, after many revisions, appears in the slim volume of his poetry. The final break with Allan came when that most generous and foolish person remarried soon after the death of his first wife. The new mistress of the household did not approve

of Poe, and rejected him as a nuisance—which he probably was.

John Allan came into an inheritance, and immediately began to furnish his home lavishly. He bought books, pictures, costly draperies, and busts; and it has been suggested that this sudden change in his surroundings probably accounts for many of Poe's sumptuous poetical backgrounds. The atmosphere of "The Raven" is heavy with interior luxury:

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust, and door:
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

The most salient point in Poe's personal history is his marriage to his cousin, Virginia, the daughter of his father's sister, Maria Clemm. "*I* was a child and *she* was a child," as he says in *Annabel Lee*.

There is a Poe legend, invented by the base journalism of his time, which still survives in spite of the work of honest biographers. He was, according to the legend, a dipsomaniac and a drug-fiend. He was neither the one nor the other. There were times when he abandoned himself to alcohol, and after the death of Virginia his self-control in that direction became weaker. There is little or no evidence that he took opium habitually.

Poe, as a story-teller, possessed two styles, entirely different from each other. In the first his aim was to create a clammy

atmosphere of illusion, in which one breathes heavily as in a fog laden with miasmic exhalations—in a region of desolation, death, the fear of impending calamity, impalpable horror that yet must create for itself some kind of form. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, his best tale in this manner, is a rhapsody of terror, which grips one like a nightmare. Nothing can surpass the skill with which, little by little, an atmosphere of horror is created, until the reader is ready to thrill through every nerve—and *then* the sound of the footsteps of the lady, buried alive and re-arisen, heard outside the door! It is a scene of horror incarnate, unexcelled.

"The Cask of Amontillado"

Poe's second manner is that of the strictest realism, applied in many ways, but most successfully, perhaps, in the detective story. Dupin, whom Sherlock Holmes acknowledged as his master, was one of the most original of the great characters in fiction. The plots of these stories are also the most ingenious that have ever been constructed—such as that of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* in which the murderer is a monkey, and that of *The Purloined Letter,* which is "concealed" by being placed conspicuously in the letter-rack. The minute accumulated details which make the most fantastic stories seem like actual life, as in *The Pit and the Pendulum,* where the reader almost seems to feel the mighty swinging blade descending over his own bound body; in *The Descent into the Maelstrom,* in which he sits within the cockle-boat as the gigantic whirlpool sucks it down; above all, in *Arthur Gordon Pym,* his only long complete romance, the narrative of the adventures of the *Grampus* on her voyage to the South Pole, with mutiny, wreck, and massacre—all these things are made as living as the scenes of Gulliver or Crusoe. *The Cask of Amontillado,* one of his shortest stories, is also one of the best. It is the tale of a man who lures his enemy into a cellar to taste a draught of Amontillado. There he fetters him in a recess, and proceeds to wall him up. This is how the story ends.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

"Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But

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THE GOLDEN LEGEND

Irmingard and Walter of the Vogelsweide.

IRMINGARD. "I listened to that single voice
Until the chambers of my heart
Were filled with it by night and day."

LONGFELLOW.

From Selected Tales of Mystery by Edgar Allan Poe, by permission of Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd.

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

Reproduced from the Colour Illustration by Byam Shaw.

One of the most powerful of Poe's Tales written so vividly that one may visualise without difficulty the devilish device of the Inquisition ' To the right- to the left far and wide—with the shriek of a damned spirit. So swings the scimitar-like drop of the Pendulum.

is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montressor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud—

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again—

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

As a poet he had still finer accomplishments. In poetry the wildernesses and deserts of his dreams blossomed into a vague beauty—an indefiniteness that had form, an obscurity lit by occasional and intelligible splendours. *The Raven* epitomises, in sensuous and haunting metre, his predominant mood of shadow and gloom. *The Bells* is a brilliant metrical experiment. His best work, however, is in neither of his two most familiar poems, but scattered through many poems, like gems glowing with inner light. The most perfect complete poem is probably *To Helen.*

Helen, thy beauty is to me
  Like those Nicæan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
  The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
  To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home

To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

The fantastic bordering on madness finds a voice in *The Haunted Palace* and *The Conqueror Worm*. In *Dream-Land* Poe achieved the almost impossible:

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From a ultimate dim Thule—
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space—out of Time.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms and caves and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—
Their still waters, still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily;
By the mountains—near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever;

By the gray woods, by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp;
By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the Ghouls;
By each spot the most unholy,
In each nook most melancholy,—
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past—
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by—
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven. . . .

There never has been, and never will be, a satisfactory definition of poetry, because poetry is a house of many mansions. According to Poe's definition in his suggestive essay on *The Poetic Principle* poetry is the "rhythmical creation of beauty."

Often does he convey an impression of sheer loveliness in words:

And all my days are trances,
  And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
  And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
  By what eternal streams.

Poe died at Baltimore on October 7, 1849. What precisely happened during the last three or four days of his life remains obscure. The generally accepted story is that, being detained in Baltimore by accident, he drank too freely. This was on the eve of a municipal election, and he was found wandering about the streets by the abominable agents of a political club. They detained him for the night, and the next morning he was drugged and made to vote in eleven different wards. Then he was abandoned; recognised by an acquaintance as he lay on a bench; and taken to the Washington University Hospital. The doctor who attended him there stated—five-and-twenty years after Poe's death—that there was no trace of alcohol or drugs about him. Always mysterious, it was Poe's fate to die mysteriously.

§ 5

Walt Whitman

Writing in 1855, Emerson described Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." That is as true to-day as it was nearly seventy years ago.

Walt Whitman was born on Long Island, New York, in 1819, the second son of a family of nine. His father was a farmer and carpenter. His ancestry was partly English and partly Dutch, and all his forbears were either farmers or sailors. His only inheritance was the love of the sea and the open air. Early in his life Whitman's family moved to Brooklyn, and he began to earn his living as an errand-boy, afterwards becoming a printer, a teacher, and a journalist. He was for a while on the staff of the *Brooklyn Eagle,* and then he went south to write for the New Orleans *Crescent.* In 1851 he was back again in Brooklyn, buying and selling small houses and writing magazine articles and novels of no great merit. The first edition of his poems *Leaves of Grass* was published in the summer of 1855. When the Civil War broke out, Whitman did not volunteer for active service, and was not drafted; his age, forty-one, is probably sufficient explanation. He volunteered, however, as a nurse in the military hospitals in Washington, an experience that led to the writing of the series of war poems which he called *Drum Taps* and which are now always incorporated with *Leaves of Grass.* After the war he stayed for some years in Washington, having obtained a position in the Government service. He had a paralytic stroke in 1873 and removed to Camden, New Jersey, where he remained until his death in 1892. He published two prose volumes—*Democratic Vistas* in 1871 and *Specimen Days in America* in 1882. Whitman never married. John Burroughs says that his life "was a poet's life from first to last—free, unworldly, unhurried, unconventional, unselfish, and was contentedly and joyously lived."

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THE RAVEN

From a Colour Illustration by Edmund Dulac

The above illustration to Edgar Allan Poe's great poem *The Raven* strikingly depicts the scene in the chamber when

" there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door

The Raven.

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THE BELLS

From the coloured Illustration by Edmund Dulac.

"And the people—ah, the people—
They that dwell up in the steeple

They are Ghouls:
And their king it is who tolls."

The Bells by EDGAR ALLAN POE

Self-Revelation

In all literature, no poet has ever more persistently sung himself. There is almost blatant self-revelation in every line that Whitman wrote. He compels recognition of his own individuality. "I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature." He says of his poems:

> Camerado, this is no book;
> Who touches this, touches a man.

Born in the Puritanic finicky pre-Civil War America, Whitman was almost outrageously masculine. He was a large man shouting at the world. His personal appearance in his middle life has been described by a contemporary: "He was quite six feet in height, with the frame of a gladiator, a flowing gray beard mingled with the hairs on his broad, slightly bared chest. In his well-laundried checked shirt-sleeves, with trousers frequently pushed into his bootlegs, his fine head covered with an immense slouched black or light felt hat, he would walk about with a naturally majestic stride, a massive model of ease and independence."

Whitman is the poet of democracy. He loved himself, but he loved himself because he loved life—not delicate, refined life but the life of sweat and energy. "Muscle and pluck for ever" was one of his slogans. Loving himself and loving life, he also loved his fellows with an abounding enthusiasm that no other poet has ever equalled. Like St. Francis, his love included all the creatures of the earth, and he shouted the Christian gospel that only by love can the world be saved.

A SONG

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the lifelong love of comrades.

I will paint companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America,
and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.
For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you, ma femme!
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

To Whitman friendship was the "base of all metaphysics."

Yet underneath Socrates I clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend.

The man concerned most with the good government of his parish is always the best citizen of his country. Only the reasonable patriot can ever be a useful cosmopolitan. We must begin at the beginning. So Whitman suggests that the socialist must be at the same time an individualist—respect for the mass being dependent on respect for the individual.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself is the word of the past and present, and the true word of immortality;
No one can acquire for another—not one;
No one can grow for another—not one.

His immense egoism, coupled with his appreciation of fraternity, or it is better to say, his sense of the divine in man, compels him to claim kinship with all that is best and finest—even with the Crucified.

I do not sound your name, but I understand you, (there are others also:)
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you, and to salute those that are with you, before and since, and those to come also,
That we all labour together, transmitting the same charge and succession.

Whitman's joy in the life of man is not confined to the mind and the spirit. In the set of poems that he calls *Children of Adam* he acclaims the pleasures of the body with a frank heartiness that

shocked the delicate-minded New England of his day and caused Oliver Wendell Holmes to declare: "The poets coquette with Nature and weave garlands of roses for her; but Whitman goes at her like a great hirsute man—no, it won't do." But with all his boldly expressed joy in the flesh, Whitman has nothing in common with the decadents who gloat over nastiness. Every normal human experience seemed to him to have beauty and dignity, and in everything he wrote there is the clean open air—the simplicity of sincerity, the refusal to recognise evil. Whitman is never stuffy, never "suggestive."

If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

And beauty to him is not dependent on youth and passion.

Women sit or move to and fro, some old, some young;
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than the young.

When America started on the race for wealth that began after the Civil War, Whitman became a splendid figure of protest, the apostle of anti-greed. He was vehemently American, but his was not a narrow nationalism. "I salute all the inhabitants of the earth," he says in one of his poems, and, writing of the triumphant voyage of American democracy, he adds:

Venerable, priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal, feudal Europe sails with thee.

Whitman was certainly an unequal poet. He paid for being entirely undisciplined. He hated restraint and cared nothing for the rules of verse-writing. Sometimes he is flat, sometimes he is turgid, sometimes he is ridiculous. His long catalogues of names are wearisome and as far removed from poetry as the verse of Dr. Watts. No poet is easier to parody.

But at his best Whitman found exactly the right way of saying what he had to say. There is, as W. M. Rossetti said, "a deep and majestical rhythmical sense" in his famous dirge for President Lincoln, When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed.

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.

Dark Mother, always gliding near, with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

. . . . . .

The night, in silence, under many a star,
The ocean shore, and the husky whispering wave, whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide;
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!

And how tender is the farewell:

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won.
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

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EUROPA AND THE BULL

From the Colour Illustration by Edmund Dulac.

The tale of Europa and her three brothers, Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix, is charmingly told in *The Dragon's Teeth*, one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*.

Europa, the little princess, persuaded by the bull to ride on his back, is carried off by the creature, which, plunging into the sea, swims away from the shore, princess and bull being speedily lost to the view of Europa's sorrowing brothers.

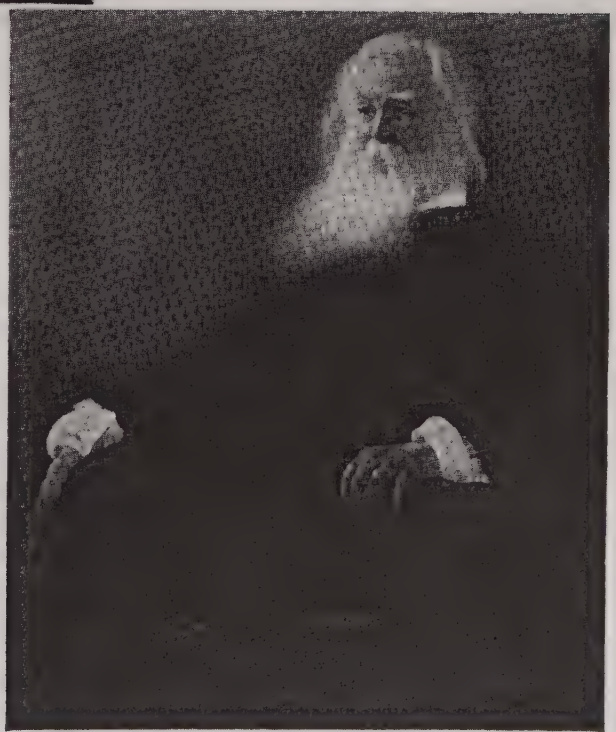

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WALT WHITMAN, BY G. J. W. ALEXANDER

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The Good Grey Poet of America.

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"I will sing the song of companionship."

From *Starting from Paumanok* in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*

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We found our own, O my Soul in the calm and cool of the daybreak

From the poem *Walt Whitman*, in *Leaves of Grass*.

§ 6

John Greenleaf Whittier

John Greenleaf Whittier was born in Massachusetts in the same year as Longfellow, 1807. The early circumstances, however, of the two poets were vastly different. Longfellow's family was well-to-do. Whittier was the son of a small Quaker farmer, too poor to give his children much schooling, but fortunate in being able to endow them with courage, piety, and the love of simplicity. Whittier was brought up on Burns and the Bible. While he was a boy he began to write verses, some of which were printed in a paper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, the famous anti-slavery leader. In order to pay for some sort of education, Whittier learned to make shoes, working his way through college as many another American boy has done, by his own energy and hard work. Elected to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1835, he became a year later secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Longfellow gently disapproved of slavery, but his was not the temperament for politics and strife.

With his verse and his prose Whittier did perhaps more than any other writer, with the exception of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, to arouse the conscience of the North against the existence of slavery within the boundaries of the United States. After the Civil War was fought and won, Whittier characteristically devoted himself to the appeasement of passion, and to the creation of a new fraternity between North and South. He died in 1892.

His poems, like those of Longfellow, have a perennial fascination for the schoolroom and the drawing-room reciter. Which of us has not learned *Barbara Frietchie* by heart? He was a prolific writer, always working with a moral purpose, limited in education and in experience, lacking intellectual power, imagination, and artistic judgment. But he was tremendously sincere and tremendously earnest. Critical opinion agrees that his one really great poem is *Ichabod* which he wrote when Daniel Webster, the famous American orator, had betrayed the hopes of the anti-

slavery party. *Ichabod* is magnificent invective and is worth reproducing in full:

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
  Which once he wore!
The glory from his grey hairs gone
  For evermore.

Revile him not,—the Tempter hath
  A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
  Befit his fall!

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
  When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age
  Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
  A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
  From hope and heaven!

Let not the land once proud of him
  Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
  Dishonoured brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
  From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
  In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honoured, naught
  Save power remains,—
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
  Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes
  The soul has fled:
When faith is lost, when honour dies,
  The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

Many of Whittier's passionate pleas for the liberty of man, especially of the black man, belonged less to poetry than to an exalted type of journalism. His songs of freedom were often written in haste, and, with equal haste, were printed as broadsides, or upon cards, or were read at Anti-Slavery meetings, or were sent to newspapers. They were written to strike the iron while it was hot, and to enforce an ideal as the vision of it grew in the common mind. They were trumpet-calls to action. Whatever their artistic defects may be, the heart can still beat double to the march and meaning of lines like these:

The voice of Massachusetts! Of her free sons and daughters,—
Deep calling unto deep aloud,—the sound of many waters.
Against the burden of that voice what tyrant power shall stand?
No fetters in the Bay State! No slave upon her land!

. . . . . .

We wage no war,—we lift no arm,—we fling no torch within
The fire-damps of the quaking mine beneath your soil of sin;
We leave ye with your bondmen, to wrestle, while ye can,
With the strong upward tendencies and god-like soul of man!

But Whittier was not only a writer in the cause of freedom; he was also a true poet, and the recent tendency of criticism is to pass by the anti-slavery verses and to dwell on such splendid works of art as *King Solomon and the Ants, Telling the Bees,* and *Skipper Ireson's Ride.* So keen a judge of modern verse as Lafcadio Hearn, never tired praising this aspect of Whittier's verse.

§ 7

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in 1811. She was the sixth child of Lyman Beecher, a well-known Connecticut Congrega-

tional Minister, and the father of a far better known preacher, Henry Ward Beecher. Harriet was a precocious child. When she was eleven she wrote an essay answering the question, "Can the immortality of the soul be proved by the light of nature?" and she followed this essay with a poetic drama. She was "converted" when she was fourteen, subsequently and, in the circumstances, naturally suffering from religious melancholy.

In 1832 Dr. Beecher and his family removed to Cincinnati, a city on the borderline between the North and the South of the United States. Living in Cincinnati, Harriet Beecher saw for herself the condition of the slaves, though in Kentucky, the nearest slave state to Cincinnati, a very mild paternal form of slavery existed, as the readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will remember. Harriet married the Reverend Calvin E. Stowe in 1836, and fifteen years later she began to write her famous story. It is interesting to know that she wrote the conclusion, the death of Uncle Tom, first, and before she wrote any more read the chapter to her own children, being encouraged to go on from the fact that they wept bitterly. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a fair success as a serial, though Mrs. Beecher Stowe had sold the serial rights for about seventy pounds. Publication in book form, however, gave her immediate fame, made her, indeed, one of the most famous authors who ever lived. It is not necessary here to consider in detail a book which almost every English-speaking man, woman, and child has read, and which has been translated into practically every language spoken by man. No less a writer than George Sand, who reviewed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when it first appeared, warmly praised its sincerity and strength. Women as different as Harriet Martineau and Queen Victoria were among Mrs. Stowe's admirers. She lived until 1896. Like Whittier, after the Civil War, she helped in the good work of reconciliation. She wrote several other novels, but all of them are forgotten.

The world remembers nothing else about Harriet Beecher Stowe than that she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and as Mr. Trent

Photo Rischgitz Collection.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The great American nature writer.

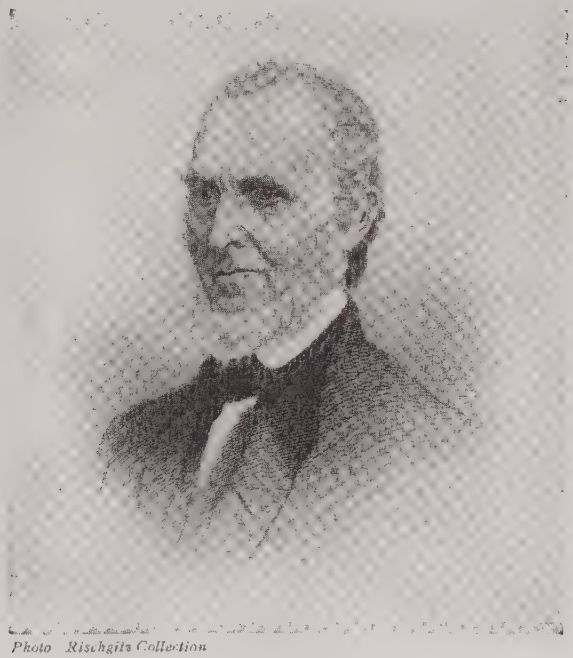

Photo Rischgitz Collection

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

The New England poet.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Humorous poet, and at one time American ambassador in London.

"THE ROARING LADS OF LITTLE BRITAIN"

From the drawing by Edmund J. Sullivan

Washington Irving in his *Sketch Book* gives a vivid description of the club which went by the name of "The Roaring Lads of Little Britain.

Little Britain, described by Washington Irving as "a cluster of narrow streets and courts," is situated hard by the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, and if Irving's description is accurate must have been in olden times a very centre of conviviality.

has said, "a book that stirs the world and is instrumental in bringing on a Civil War and freeing the enslaved race, may well elicit the admiration of a more sophisticated generation." In her moral fervour, in her evangelical faith, and in her courage, Mrs. Stowe certainly stands by right among the great Puritan writers.

Two other American writers, Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Russell Lowell, belonged to the New England school of Whittier and Longfellow, but in their writings the Puritan spirit is less apparent. Lowell was cosmopolitan in his culture, a poet, and the first and, in some respects, the most distinguished of American literary critics. But his most permanent contribution to literature is the *Biglow Papers*. Similarly Holmes, a poet of distinction and a novelist of parts, has a place in literary history mainly as the author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*.

§ 8

Henry David Thoreau

In Henry David Thoreau, who was born at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, we have a country writer very different from Gilbert White on the one hand and Izaak Walton on the other. Although much of his writing is concerned with the ways and doings of animals and plants, and with country sights and sounds generally, it is in his character of philosopher and witty commentator on human affairs that his title to fame consists. His is the gospel of sincerity, simplicity, and beauty. Of French and Scottish stock, and with strong Puritan instincts, he was, for all his cynical words, his Protestantism and his unconventional habits of life, a true child of his forbears.

All his observations of country life, and of the world of nature generally, were keen and original; and he displayed towards all living things a respect, even a reverence, none too common among naturalists. He thought of them as fellow-creatures —nay, as fellow-spirits—and they knew no fear in his presence.

When a sparrow alighted on his shoulder, he said that he was "more distinguished by that circumstance than by any epaulet he could have worn." The wood squirrels would nestle in his lap, and hares did not fly at his approach.

But, naturalist of a kind though he was, his main interest all the time remained the mind and soul of man, especially the mind and soul of Henry David Thoreau.

Even when he was a boy of seventeen, Thoreau noted in his diary his sense of the importance of self-study and self-examination. Most people, he observed, instead of looking into their own minds, try to observe the workings of the minds of others, "who should merely be considered as different editions of the same great work." It would be foolish, he says, "to borrow a work which one possesses but has not perused."

Still, his love of the open air and of the life of nature was no affectation. Emerson, who called him "The Bachelor of Nature," says that Thoreau "knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. His intimacy with animals suggested, what Thomas Fuller records of Butler, the apiologist, 'that either he had told the bees things, or the bees had told him.' "

It is by his two years' sojourn in the Walden woods, a mile from his native village, or rather by the remarkable book in which he recorded his doings and reflections during that sojourn, that Thoreau's name is best known. Much nonsense has been talked about this "return to primitive life," and many sentimentalists have imitated it, so far as externals are concerned. But Thoreau himself had no illusions about it. He says:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach; and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

And in the concluding chapter of *Walden* he writes:

> I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one.

The last things he wanted were disciples and imitators. He even wished to avoid imitating himself.

> It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived at Walden a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side.

Walden is one of the great books of the world. It is unlike any other, less by reason of its point of view than of its quaintness of arrangement, Attic wit, and constant surprises. Thoreau's insistence on high and exacting ideals may sometimes suggest moral priggishness; and perhaps his aloofness and contempt for easygoing folks afford some justification for this suspicion. But he was no humbug, and his practice was at least level with his precepts. His courage was unlimited, and there is no finer example of true nobility of character than is afforded by his public action when, amid general approval, John Brown the abolitionist was condemned to be executed.

He wrote in *Walden:*

> The greater part of what my neighbours call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behaviour. You may say the wisest thing you can, old man. I hear an irresistible voice that invites me away from all that.

And what he thought, he did.

> "A truly good book," he says elsewhere, "teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down, and commence living on its hint. It is slipping out of my fingers while I read. . . . So I cannot stay to hear a good sermon,

and applaud at the conclusion, but shall be half-way to Thermopylæ before that."

"It does not so much matter what kind of paper you drop into the ballot-box once a year, as what kind of man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning." That is perhaps the leading note of Thoreau's life and Thoreau's work. And we find it again in his lines, "Knowledge":

Men say they know many things,
But lo! they have taken wings—
The arts and sciences
And a thousand appliances;
The wind that blows
Is all that anybody knows.

Apart from *Walden,* which was published in 1854, his best work is contained in a volume entitled *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers;* which incidentally includes what is perhaps the finest utterance on friendship in any literature.

§ 9

Washington Irving

Humour has become one of the outstanding features in American literature, but it developed late. If we recall the conditions in which that literature came to birth, the fact is not surprising. The people of the English-speaking colonies were a hardfaring folk, engaged in a material struggle to establish the plantations and develop commerce on the sea. Whatever life they had time for, apart from their daily occupation, was sought in religion, which they practised dourly, and felt intensely. The history of American humour begins with the appearance of Washington Irving.

Irving's satirical extravaganza, *A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker,* was published in 1809. In it, the old Dutch settlers of Manhattan Island were good-naturedly yet brilliantly burlesqued. The humour of his picture of the ubiquitous

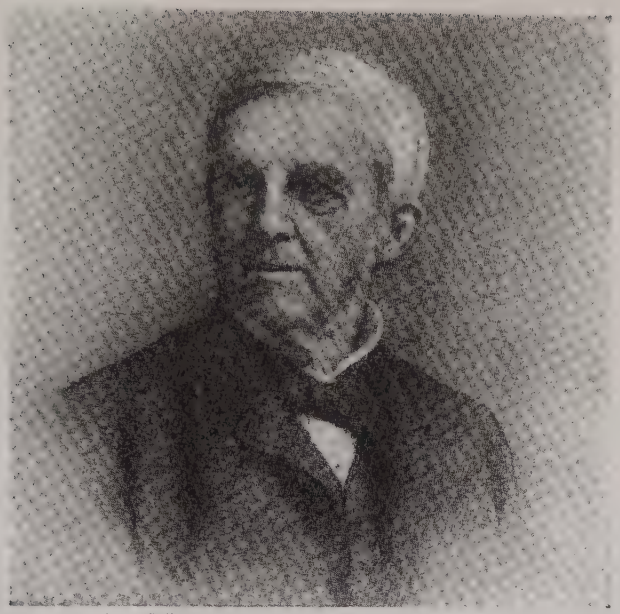

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

The author of *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table.*

From an original pencil drawing by Rudolph Lehmann, dated June 6, 1886.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE HOUSE OF OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

By permission of Messrs. Chatto & Windus

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Huck Finn, the motherless, fatherless waif, is one of Mark Twain's most fascinating heroes. In many respects Huck is a reflection of his creator's own early days in the Mississippi valley. In the quaint *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain has given us one of the finest pictures existing of life in the backwoods

little man in knee-breeches and cocked hat is irresistible. Much of the humour that came after Irving's had only a local audience, but his appeal was a wide one, for when Sir Walter Scott read the book "his sides were sore with laughing."

At the time of this success Irving was twenty-six, and the next ten years were passed in distracting mercantile pursuits the end of which was his bankruptcy. *The Sketch Book,* issued in parts during 1819-20, was the outcome of his resolve to devote his whole attention to literature. Its welcome quickly extended from the United States to Europe. Irving's humour had matured, acquiring a felicitous subtlety. For example, when Rip Van Winkle returned to the village after his mountain-sleep of twenty years, the ruby face of King George on the inn-sign under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe was singularly metamorphosed. "The red hat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON." A little masterpiece is this story of Rip, a good-humoured, indolent sort of fellow who encounters a strange company playing at ninepins in the Kaatskill Mountains, and having tasted their liquor falls into his lengthy sleep. The underlying whimsicality of the narrative never detracts from the eeriness of the theme. So confidently does Irving hold the balance that he is able to risk closing on a note of extreme slyness: "And it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavily on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon."

A famous companion story is "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in the same volume. Two years later Irving published *Bracebridge Hall,* maintaining his previous high level as a genially human miniaturist, and presenting an admirable foil to the brave, broad, and Odyssean romance of his contemporary, James Fenimore Cooper. Irving died in 1859.

By this time American literature was in full flood, although it is curious that Irving's influence was not noticeable in any of the humorous writings that followed on the heels of his chief successes. Their form was often the same, that of the short sketch and essay in which was recorded an existing state of manners, but they introduced the traits with which American humour has become generally associated, a tendency towards burlesque of a violently grotesque nature, and a raw localism of accent first used with effect by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the Canadian creator of "Sam Slick," a Yankee pedlar and clockmaker. Indeed, the recipe which practically all the American humorists have worked on is that of creating a central character, like Sam Weller in *Pickwick Papers,* more or less individual, and letting him talk.

American culture, though here and there, as in Boston, almost European, was still in its unsophisticated stages for the most part, and even James Russell Lowell did not disdain the use of dialect and the manifold forms of drollery then in vogue. *The Biglow Papers,* a series of satires against the Mexican War, (1846) is his best work, and the first of modern satires in English. A good deal of it has lost interest, but there are poems in the volume which will always captivate through their grotesque humour, sparkling wit, and quaint mannerisms. *The Courtin',* as an example, is the simple story of a young man, Zekle, who one night "crep' up quite unbeknown, and peeked in thru' the winder, an' there sot Huldy all alone." Now Huldy thought much of Zekle: he was "six foot o' man, A 1, who had sparked it with full twenty gals, but couldn't love any of them":

> She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing
> Ez hisn in the choir;
> My! when he made Ole Hundred ring,
> She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

When Zekle eventually summoned up courage to enter Huldy's kitchen:

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
Then stood a spell on t'other,
An' on which one he felt the wust
He couldn't ha' told ye, nuther.

Zekle said: "I'd better call again." She said: "Think likely, *Mister.*" That last word "stung him like a pin," and . . . well, everything came right immediately, "Mister" rhyming, of course, with "kissed her."

A simple, homely tale, but related with great charm, and Lowell was to write many of the like before he laid down his pen. A second series of *Biglow Papers,* dealing with the slavery question and the Union, quieter in tone but still rich in comedy, appeared fifteen years after that first success, and they were as well received as the earlier series. But now they had to share their audience with the thoroughgoing capers of Henry Wheeler Shaw and Charles Farrar Browne, the former of whom is faintly remembered under the pseudonym of "Josh Billings" and the latter well remembered as "Artemus Ward."

The prevalent habit of comic misspelling was exploited by Billings and Ward to the utmost limit, producing an amazing blend of illiteracy and worldly shrewdness, to which was added, especially in the case of Billings, a mocking vein of really sound and original moralising. Billings preferred the epigrammatic method. "Trusting to luck," he would say, "is only another name for 'trusting to laziness.' " Again, "Human happiness kinsists in having what yu want, and wanting what yu hav." Two of his best sayings refer to the same human quality:

> A vivid imaginashun iz like sum glasses, makes things at a distance look twice az big az they am, and cluss to, twice az small az they am. . . . Imaginashun, tew mutch indulged in, soon iz tortured into reality: this iz one way that good hoss thiefs are made, a man leans over a fence all day, and imagines the hoss in the lot belongs tew him, and sure enuff, the fust dark night, the hoss does.

In 1858, when Charles Farrar Browne was twenty-four, he wrote a description of an imaginary travelling menagerie, under the pen-name of "Artemus Ward, Showman." The story took the country by storm and as the author immediately began to show that in retailing his ludicrous mixture of sense and nonsense he was as much at home on the lecture-platform as in composing humorous pieces for the newspapers, his success was duplicated everywhere. *Artemus Ward, his Book,* and *Artemus Ward in England* are perhaps the best known of his writings on this side of the Atlantic. (It was in England that, at an early age, he died from pulmonary disease.) But *Artemus Ward among the Mormons* (whose religion is singular, he explained, but their wives are plural) and *Artemus Ward, his Panorama* are equally characteristic.

§ 10

Oliver Wendell Holmes

The broader type of humour, especially that which depended for its appeal on word-caricature, seems to have temporarily exhausted its vein by the opening of the Civil War, partly because of the uproarious lengths to which Billings and Ward had taken it, and partly because the reading public's attention had been diverted by a different kind of humorist, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was the first successor of Washington Irving fit to rank alongside him. Holmes was a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, and he was nearly fifty years of age when his *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* (1857-8) was published and at once greeted with universal acclamation. In this go-as-you-please volume, the playfully wise sayings, thoughts, and set discourses of a philosopher are relieved here and there by the delicious vignettes of a poet, both combined in a single person who holds forth to his fellow-lodgers in a boarding-house. Here is the autocrat's criticism of a habit which, as we have seen, his countrymen indulged in at that time very freely:

THE DEATH OF UNCLE TOM

From the drawing by George Cruikshank in the first illustrated English edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852.

"When George entered the shed, he felt his head giddy and his heart sick. 'Is it possible? Is it possible?' said he, kneeling down by him. 'Uncle Tom, my poor old friend!'"—*Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

M-A-R-K TWAIN!"

One part of the Mississippi

The sounder's call. By the mark, one! By the mark, swain, suggested to Samuel Langhorne Clemens the pseudonym when he adopted and which was later to become so famous.

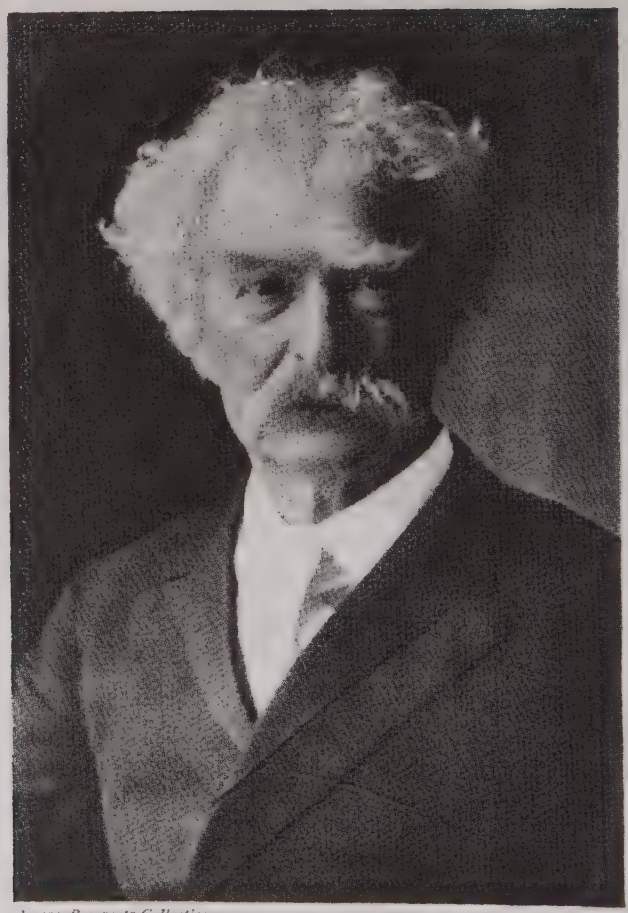

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

MARK TWAIN

The greatest of all American humorists.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if the blow were given for such cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided, Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, When charity was like a top? It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then—and not till then—struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the *Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany,* intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother justices, who unanimously replied "Jest so." The chief rejoined that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the Sheriff. . . . But Majesty itself must have its royal quibble. "Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh," said Queen Elizabeth, "but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester."

Often there is a sob audible before the laughter has gone far. A charming love-story runs through *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*—this, incidentally, giving the book a right to be classed as fiction. The autocrat had walked morning after morning with the schoolmistress. But though master of the breakfast table he dared speak no word of love. One morning, as they approached what was called the "long path," he determined to bring the affair to an issue:

I felt very weak indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit) as we came opposite the head of this path on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question, "Will you take the long path with me?" "Certainly," said the schoolmistress, "with much pleasure." "Think," I said, "before you answer; if you take the long path with me now

I shall interpret it that we are to part no more!" The schoolmistress stepped back with a sudden movement, as if an arrow had struck her. One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by, the one you may still see close by the Gingko-tree. "Pray sit down." I said. "No, no," she answered, softly, "I will walk the *long path* with you!"

The success of *The Autocrat*, like that of Irving's *Sketch Book* and Lowell's *Biglow Papers*, overtopped the successes of the broader, comedian-like writers. Holmes followed up his first hit with *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, characterised by their author as the wine squeezed into the press after the first juice that runs of itself from the fruit. These volumes resembled their predecessor in that they were steeped in a winning personality, but while *The Professor* was published after the first of the series, *The Poet* only came after an interval of fourteen years, and the effect of the Civil War was apparent in its greater soberness. Other writers differed from Holmes in this, for after the Civil War there was a return to boisterousness; but with a difference, for while it reached its most artistic achievements so far through Bret Harte, Charles Godfrey Leland, John Hay, Joel Chandler Harris, and Mark Twain, it was never devoid of a tender quality, the tenderness of disillusioned idealists, entitling many of their pages to rank for their universal note with those of Irving and Holmes.

§ 11

Mark Twain

A greater than all the writers named is, of course, Mark Twain; and as in him were combined to the highest degree the qualities which separately accounted for the popularity of the others it will be more convenient to approach his work through theirs, not forgetting that he was the vortex, the heart, the pumping engine of this new lusty blood. For in 1857 he published *The*

Celebrated Jumping Frog, and other Sketches, scaling the peaks of popularity "at a single jump."

But Mark Twain was master of all the post-Civil War humorists. He outlived practically all of them, moreover, although born in 1835; even before his death (which took place in 1910) it was plain that his work would outlive theirs also. The qualities in which they excelled are his qualities, for he has "the dry, incisive humour of the man of the world who, having gone through life with his eyes wide open, has cheered himself by laughing not merely at the follies of his fellow-men, but, by implication, at himself as well." Samuel Langhorne Clemens was his baptismal name, and though at a dinner-party in London he humorously gave his birthplace as Aberdeen, County Cork, England, the honour really fell to Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. He had to shift for himself when he was about twelve years old.

At seventeen he was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River. It was from the custom of calling the soundings "mark one," "mark twain," "mark three," to indicate the depth of the river in fathoms that he borrowed his pseudonym. His early experiences have all been turned to account in his writings. Often they are done with a purpose, as in *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur,* where an American, finding himself in the middle of King Arthur's England, proceeds to strip off the glamour and tinsel of "chivalry," and show the evils and misery that actually existed. But the two books on which his great reputation was originally founded, and which represent him in his early achievement, are *The Jumping Frog* and *The Innocents Abroad.* These are medleys of fact and imagination, the facts of course being exaggerated to the limits of absurdity. A sense of the absurd, indeed, is Mark Twain's greatest asset, even when it tells against himself. At Delhi, for instance, two monkeys got into his room. He writes: "When I woke, one of them was before the glass brushing his hair, and the other one had my notebook, and was reading a page of humorous notes, and crying. I did not mind

the one with the hair-brush, but the conduct of the other one hurt me; it hurts me yet."

The Innocents Abroad is an account of travel in the Mediterranean and the adjacent countries. A party of "innocents" adopt the rôle of impervious Philistines, with no reverence for the works or figures of antiquity, the historical and sacred memorials about which the sentimental tourist, guidebook in hand, is in the habit of raving.

Here, for example, is his impression of some of the old Masters of Venice:

> But, humble as we are, and unpretending, in the matter of Art, our researches among the painted monks and martyrs have not been wholly in vain. We have striven hard to learn. We have had some success. We have mastered some things, possibly of trifling import in the eyes of the learned, but to us they give pleasure, and we take as much pride in our little acquirements as do others who have learned far more, and we love to display them full as well. When we see a monk going about with a lion and looking tranquilly up to heaven, we know that that is St. Mark. When we see a monk with a book and a pen, looking tranquilly up to heaven, trying to think of a word, we know that that is St. Matthew. When we see a monk sitting on a rock, looking tranquilly up to heaven, with a human skull beside him, and without other baggage, we know that that is St. Jerome. Because we know that he always went flying light in the matter of baggage. When we see a party looking tranquilly up to heaven, unconscious that his body is shot through and through with arrows, we know that that is St. Sebastian. When we see other monks looking tranquilly up to heaven but having no trade-mark, we always ask who those parties are.

In *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* he created two characters which belong to the immortal boys of fiction. Huckleberry was a study from the life, while Tom was a kind of composite portrait of three boys. Most of their adventures were

events that really happened, either to Mark himself or to his schoolfellows—so that the effect of these fine free stories is intensely vivid and alive. *Huckleberry Finn* has been called a boy's epic of the Mississippi—the call of nature to a lad's imagination—playing at brigands and parodying all the extravagances of the *Arabian Nights*.

Bret Harte described Mark Twain as he appeared on their first meeting:

> His head was striking. He had the curly hair, the aquiline nose, and even the aquiline eye—an eye so eagle-like that even a second lid would not have surprised me—of an unusual and dominant nature. His eyebrows were very thick and bushy. His dress was careless, and his general manner one of supreme indifference to surroundings and circumstances. He spoke in a slow, rather satirical drawl, which was in itself irresistible.

In Washington Irving, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Mark Twain the spirit of the "melting-pot" of extreme, noisy youth and sensitive, unembittered old age is perfectly symbolised. That inside a single century any country should have four such masters on the roll of its literary history is a very rare thing, and by virtue of them alone America's contribution to the world's literature already ranks high.

The success of Francis Bret Harte came by virtue of a single poem. He had written a burlesque in rhyme, telling of the doings of a certain Chinaman, Ah Sin ("and I shall not deny with regard to the same what that name might imply"). Ah Sin was the owner of a smile that was "pensive and childlike," seeming so guileless that it was natural for two rascally gamblers to engage him in a game at cards. The sleeve of one of these "was stuffed full of aces, and the same with intent to deceive." But the Chinee played and won, "with the smile that was childlike and bland" on his face all the time. The confederates got angry in the end

and "went for" that heathen Chinee, with the following discovery as a consequence:

In his sleeves, which were long,
He had twenty-four packs,
Which was coming it strong,
Yet I state but the facts;
And we found on his nails, which were taper,
What is frequent in taper—that's wax.

Which is why I remark,
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark,
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—
Which the same I am free to maintain.

Harte had put the verses aside as too crude and trifling for publication. Some time later, just as the magazine he was editing in San Francisco was going to press, it was discovered that there was one page of "copy" short. Having nothing else on hand, Harte had *The Heathen Chinee* set up. Instead of passing unnoticed, the poem was quoted and recited everywhere; "it swept the West and captivated the East." His famous story, *The Luck of Roaring Camp,* followed, and this time England acclaimed him. He was, indeed, a lesser, transplanted Dickens. The titles of his stories indicate their theme: *The Outcast of Poker Flat, How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar, Wan Lee, the Pagan, The Idyll of Red Gulch.* The *Atlantic Monthly* paid him ten thousand dollars to write for a year in the vein.

§ 12

John Hay

In the year of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* Colonel John Hay published his *Pike County Ballads,* which included those masterly mixtures of humour and pathos, *Little Breeches* and

Jim Bludso, the latter a story in verse of a rough and "keerless" engine-driver who gave his life for his passengers:

He warn't no saint,—but at jedgement
I'd run my chance with Jim,
'Longside of some pious gentlemen
That wouldn't shook hands with him.

He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,—
And went for it thar and then;
And Christ ain't a goin' to be too hard
On a man that died for men.

The *Pike County Ballads* were a happy accident rather than a deliberate or characteristic creative effort. Hay had returned from Spain to find everybody at home reading Bret Harte's poems and stories. He speculated upon the possibility of doing something similar, and the result was six racy ballads, different from anything he had ever done before. Strangely enough, he himself regarded them as inferior to his more orthodox work; he talked about them reluctantly and even hoped they would be forgotten. Posterity has, of course, decided otherwise. The rest of his work is hardly remembered, except *The Enchanted Shirt,* which has gone into legend.

A success almost contemporaneous with these was Charles Godfrey Leland's. He sprang to fame in 1871 with his famous ballads of *Hans Breitmann* ("broad or huge man," hinting at a big swaggerer or burly boaster). Leland depended on a grotesque mixture of German and American English, known as Pennsylvania Dutch:

Hans Breitmann gif a barty;
Dey hat biano-blayin',
I felled in luf mit a 'Merican frau,
Here name vas Madilda Yane. . . .
Der pootiest Fraulein in der hause,
She vayed 'pout doo hoondred poundt,
Und efery dime she gif a shoomp
She make der vinders sound.

§ 13

Joel Chandler Harris

Joel Chandler Harris ventured even further afield than did Leland with his Pennsylvania Dutchman. Indeed, he introduced a new variety of humour altogether with *Uncle Remus* (1880) and its sequels, *Nights with Uncle Remus* and *Uncle Remus and his Friends.* In these are superbly enshrined Harris's researches into negro folklore. Students as well as children for several decades have been arrested and delighted by the myth stories of old Remus, a shrewd, humorous old negro-product of the plantation system, a sort of uncouth Æsop of Georgia. He had an endless store, and the author asked the reader to imagine them being told night after night to a little boy. The sayings and doings of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, the wolf, the bear, and so on, each a racy personality with definite traits, are irresistible. Harris was equally effective in his fragments of negro-philosophy —"I am glad," is one example, "that man waz the last thing made. If man hadn't have bin made at all, you would never have heard me find enny fault about it." His negro-poetry has slyness lurking even in its moments of plaintive charm:

> Hi my rinktum! Black gal sweet,
> Same like goodies w'at de w'ite folks eat.

James Whitcomb Riley and Eugene Field, the former with his verse of artless rusticity:

> When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,
> And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,
> And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,
> And the rooster's hallylooyed as he tiptoes on the fence;

the latter with his brilliant burlesque

> I ain't afraid uv snakes or toads, or bugs or worms or mice,
> An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice!

and with his equally characteristic and rather better-known poems of childhood, such as *Little Boy Blue,* have their niches in American humorous literature.

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XXXIII

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH WRITERS

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§ 1

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve

THE early nineteenth-century literary reawakening of France came with the beginning of the Romantic movement, with which the great names of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas are connected. The most famous of the prose-writers associated with Victor Hugo was the celebrated critic, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, who was born in 1804 and died in 1869. Saint-Beuve began his literary career as a poet and a novelist, but early in his life he discovered that criticism was his real *métier*. He was the first literary critic to base criticism on wide knowledge and sympathetic study, disregarding traditional critical rules. Lord Morley once said that it was worth a man's while to learn French if only to read Sainte-Beuve. Some of his most interesting work is to be found in his *Causeries du Lundi* (Monday Talks), essays which originally appeared as newspaper articles. For years these Monday criticisms were the most interesting literary event in Europe. Sainte-Beuve dealt most frequently with French authors, but very often with English and classical literature. "It has been my wish," he once said, "to introduce a kind of charm into criticism and, at the same time, more reality than was previously introduced. In short, at once more poetry and more physiology. . . ."

At one time Sainte-Beuve had a particularly imperious

editor, with whom, after many quarrels, he fought a duel. The critic fought with a pistol in one hand and an umbrella in the other. "I am willing to be killed," he said, "but I don't want to get wet."

Sainte-Beuve also quarrelled with Victor Hugo on account of his affection for the poet's wife. In his old age, bitterly regretting the passions that cost him a splendid friendship, he wrote against Madame Hugo's name, "I hate her."

George Sand

Amandine Lucile Aurore Dupin, who used the pen-name of George Sand, was born in 1804 and died in 1876. In our days she is perhaps remembered far more for her love affairs with De Musset and Chopin, two men whom she succeeded in making utterly miserable, than for her books, of which she wrote nearly a hundred. George Sand was the inventor of the "unappreciated woman," a figure whom later and lesser novelists have so frequently employed. She carried on a long correspondence with Gustave Flaubert, and her letters have the qualities of charm and understanding.

She was an easy, fluent writer, working industriously in the manner of Anthony Trollope, but her writing is interesting to posterity only when it is frankly autobiographical. When she was quite young she was married to a Colonel Dudevant, a man many years her senior, who treated her with cold neglect and with whom she spent eight unhappy years. She left him after finding his will, in which curses were his only legacy to her. Paris and novel-writing followed her separation from her husband. Her first notable book was *Lucretia Floriani,* in which she describes her love affair with Chopin and in which the gentle musician is certainly not flattered. Years afterwards, and after his death, she made her intrigue with De Musset the subject of *Elle et Lui.* These two books with her letters, the most interesting of which, as has been stated, were written to Gustave Flau-

bert, are the literary works of George Sand that remain of value and interest.

Prosper Mérimée

Prosper Mérimée, author of *Carmen,* known nowadays mainly as the subject of Bizet's opera, was born in 1803 and died in 1870. While he definitely belongs to the Romantic School of writers he was entirely out of sympathy with its eccentricities and exaggerations. Mérimée met Madame de Montijo, the mother of the Empress Eugénie, while he was living in Spain, and after Eugénie's marriage with Napoleon III he became an intimate friend of the Emperor and Empress.

Lesser writers whose names are associated with the Romantic Movement are Eugene Sue, author of *The Wandering Jew;* Erckmann and Chatrian, authors of *L'Ami Fritz* and *The History of a Conscript in* 1813, and other Alsatian stories in which the glory of Napoleon is not allowed entirely to cover the horrors of militarism; and Émile Gaboriau, the inventor of the detective story.

§ 2

The Romantic writers were almost entirely interested in the past, to which they attempted to give new life by the beauty of their writing and by all the artifices of rhetoric. French literature was again made actual, as it was with Molière, and was brought back from the past to the present by Stendhal, whose great novel, *The Red and the Black,* may be regarded as the beginning of French realism. Stendhal's real name was Henri Bayle. He was born in 1783 and died in 1842. He served in the Napoleonic armies and was present at Marengo, Jena, and the Moscow disaster. He had sufficient sympathy with the Romanticists vastly to prefer Shakespeare to Racine, but in *The Red and the Black,* by far the most important of his novels, he is not only concerned with the realistic presentation of contemporary

life, but he also revolts against the sentimental sympathy with the poor and oppressed that finds expression in such a novel as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables.* The principal figure of *The Red and the Black* is a consummate scoundrel who contrives to have a particularly pleasant life through the force of his entirely unmoral character. In the general scheme of his story, Stendhal to some extent anticipates Nietzsche in the doctrine of the all-conquering "blonde beast." Every character in the story is subtly individualised, and there is in it that "remorseless fidelity to truth" that is the outstanding quality of modern French fiction.

Important as Stendhal is, he is completely overshadowed by Honoré de Balzac, described by Saint-Beuve as the greatest Frenchman who ever lived. Balzac was born in 1799 and died in 1850, and he too, quite inevitably, was at the beginning of his career affected by the prevailing romanticism of the time.

Honoré de Balzac and the Human Comedy

In 1842 Balzac conceived the great scheme of the *Human Comedy,* a long series of novels, the basic idea of which was, as he himself said, "the history of the human heart traced thread by thread, and social history made in all its parts"—a vast picture of the life of his time. It is said that the idea came to him from Dante, the contrast between the Human Comedy and the Divine Comedy being the contrast between the spiritual Florentine poet and the French novelist with what Mr. Lytton Strachey has called "his coarse, large, germinating spirit." Life to Balzac was comedy in the ironic sense:

> Even these actors, still this comedy;
> And spite all gloss of man's hypocrisy,
> One truth lies under all—a skeleton.

The *Human Comedy* is divided into sections—scenes of private life, scenes of provincial life, scenes of Parisian life, scenes

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"TEARS FROM A DRAGOON!"

From the Colour Illustration by Rene Bull.

Prosper Merimée's romance *Carmen*, on which Meilhac and Halévy founded their libretto for Georges Bizet's opera of that name, is world-famous. In the illustration given here, Don José Lizzarrabengoa Dragoon, seeks solitude in a church to weep over the latest caprice of Carmen—the Carmen who refuses to come when you call her and comes when you don't, which according to Prosper Mérimée "is the way with women and cats."

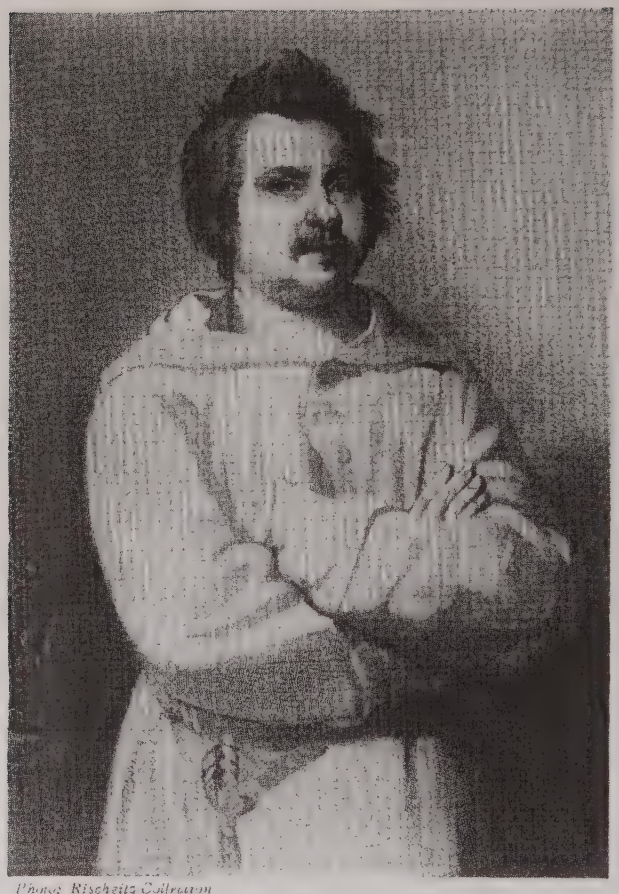
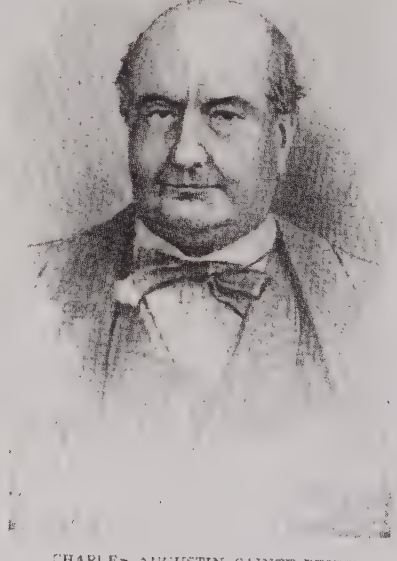


Photo: Rischgitz Collection

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Part romanticist, part realist, Balzac is perhaps the greatest of French nineteenth-century novelists.

After a drawing by L. Boulanger.



CHARLES AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE

The most famous French nineteenth-century critic.

of political life, scenes of military life, scenes of country life, philosophical studies, analytical studies. As it was first conceived by Balzac it was to consist of a hundred and thirty-three separate volumes, but many of them were never written. No novelist has ever conceived such a gigantic scheme, no novelist has ever created on the same great scale. He lives in French literature as Dickens lives in English literature, by his gallery of brilliant portraits, among whom the women have the greater vitality. "Women," said Henry James, "are the keynote of the *Human Comedy*. If the men were taken out there would be great gaps and fissures; if the women were taken out the whole fabric would collapse."

Balzac created realism. He cared for nothing so much as truth. He was moved by Victor Hugo's poetry, but he declared against the "childish folly of prisons and coffins, and a thousand ridiculous absurdities," and declared that Victor Hugo was a "Titian painting his frescoes on a wall of mud." At another time he described the romantic novelists as "riding on horseback over vacuum." But Balzac was never quite able to cure himself of romanticism, and he often falls into the melodramatic sentimentality of the novelette. Probably he wrote too much always to write well. A French critic, Émile Faguet, has even gone so far as to say, "Balzac was a very bad writer."

He succeeded in demonstrating the drama of everyday life, the passion of the commonplace. His characters are modern men and women actuated by the motives of the modern world, and he has the curious quality of most realistic writers of being more successful with the unpleasant and repulsive than with the good and attractive. Perhaps the masterpieces of the *Human Comedy* are: *Le Peau de Chagrin, Le Curé de Tours, Eugénie Grandet, Le Chef-d'œuvre Inconnu, Le Père Goriot, Le Curé du Village, La Cousine Bette, Le Cousin Pons.* In addition to the *Human Comedy,* Balzac wrote the *Contes Drolatiques,* extraordinary imitations of Rabelais written in mediæval French. Like Scott, Balzac was spurred on to his amazing literary activity

by his constant need of money, though, unlike Scott, his difficulties were all of his own making. His father had intended that he should become a lawyer, but when he was twenty-one Balzac declared his intention of making literature his vocation, whereupon he was promptly left to half starve in a Paris garret in the hope that he would see the error of his ways.

Early in his life he started a long series of letters written to various women, in which he told his ambitions and revealed his character. From 1825 to 1828 Balzac endeavoured to make his fortune as a publisher, printer, and type-founder. The result was bankruptcy and a debt of a hundred thousand francs, which it took him ten years to pay. He generally started work at twelve o'clock at night and would often go on writing for sixteen hours at a stretch. As Sir Frederick Wedmore has well said, "Balzac hardly had time to live: always working, always in debt, always a spendthrift." In the De Goncourts' diary there is an excellent story of Balzac and Lord Hertford, who spent his life in Paris and to whose taste and enterprise the English nation owes the Wallace Collection. Hertford wanted to meet Balzac, and an interview was arranged; but at the last moment a friend of the novelist told the Englishman that Balzac could not keep the appointment because he was threatened with arrest for debt and imprisonment at Clichy, and dared only go out in the evening.

> Then Hertford shouted:
>
> "Clichy . . . Clichy . . . what does he owe?"
>
> "A huge sum," replied Lacroix; "perhaps 40,000 francs, perhaps 50,000 francs, perhaps more."
>
> "Well, let him come, and I'll pay his debts."
>
> In spite of this promise, Hertford could never induce Balzac to meet him.

Balzac lost his money in mad harum-scarum schemes. His three years' experience of business had given him a permanent interest in money-making. The interest was continually shown in

his novels, and in real life he endeavoured to imitate his characters, with dire results. The author of *An Englishman in Paris* once asked Méry how Balzac's money went, and he replied:

> In sops to his imagination, in balloons to the land of dreams, which balloons he constructs with his hard-won earnings and inflates with the essence of his visions, but which nevertheless will not rise three feet from the earth. . . . Balzac is firmly convinced that every one of his characters has had, or has still, its counterpart in real life, notably the characters that have risen from humble beginnings to great wealth; and he thinks that, having worked out the secret of their success on paper, he can put it in practice. He embarks on the most harum-scarum speculations without the slightest practical knowledge; as, for instance, when he drew the plans for his country house at Ville d'Avray, and insisted upon the builder carrying them out in every respect while he was away. When the place was finished there was not a single staircase. Of course, they had to put them outside, and he maintained that it was part of his original plan; but he had never given a thought to the means of ascent.

He made grandiose plans for the garden of his country house. Part of it was to be a dairy, and in another part he proposed to grow pineapples and Malaga grapes, from which he calculated he would make at least 30,000 francs a year. Another of his money-making schemes was to melt the silver of the slag-heaps in the Roman mines in Sardinia.

Balzac was no democrat. "Proletarians seem to me," he said, "to be the minors of a nation, and ought always to remain under guardianship."

But despite his preference for aristocratic government, Balzac never really succeeded in convincingly drawing a gentleman, and he himself had few of the qualities of the well-bred. Madame de Berny, perhaps the wisest of his many women friends, wrote to him in 1832: "Have it so: the whole multitude notices you from all sides owing to the height at which you stand, but don't

cry out to them to admire you." The first of his women correspondents was his sister; the last a wealthy Polish woman called Madame du Hanska. The friendship lasted for many years, and Balzac often broke his work in Paris to journey half across Europe to see her. They were married on August 20, 1850, shortly before Balzac's death.

In his funeral discourse, Victor Hugo declared that Balzac's writing was "instinct with observation and imagination." As with Dickens, the imagination sometimes obscures the reality. To quote Professor Saintsbury: "Everything is seen through a kind of distorting lens, though the actual vision is defined with the greatest precision and in the most vivid colours. . . . He can analyse vice and meanness with wonderful vigour and he is almost unmatched in the power of conferring apparent reality upon what the reader feels to be imaginary and ideal. It follows almost necessarily that he is happiest when his subject has a strong touch of the fantastic." From this point of view the *Peau de Chagrin,* the story of a magic skin, is perhaps Balzac's masterpiece.

§ 3

Gustave Flaubert

Gustave Flaubert was a Norman, born at Rouen in 1821. He spent the six years from 1850 to 1856 writing his great novel, *Madame Bovary,* the first example, as it is certainly the finest, of absolute French realistic fiction, as compared with the semi-sentimental realism of Balzac.

Madame Bovary is a picture of provincial life in the middle years of the nineteenth century. It was the life to which Flaubert belonged and which he knew intimately. Like most artists who have sprung from the bourgeoisie, he had a bitter antipathy to his own class, and in *Madame Bovary* he suggests that the bourgeois is always ridiculous, but most ridiculous when, without any individual qualities, he endeavours to escape from the world to which he belongs. The outstanding qualities of *Madame*

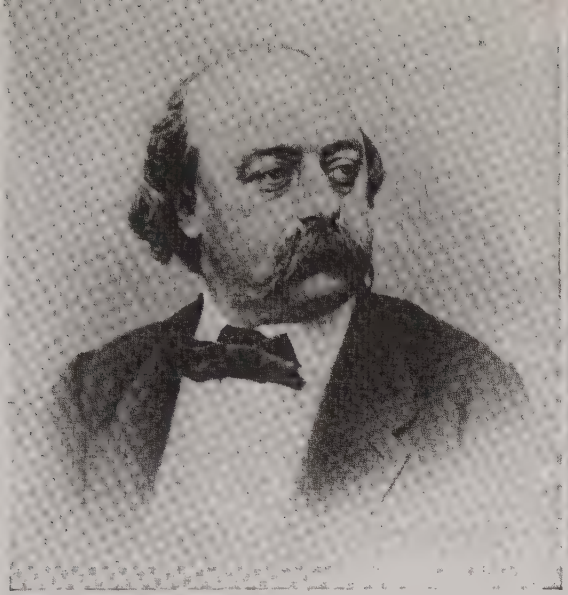


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

The author of *Madame Bovary*, and the father of French naturalism

Photo: W. A. Mansell & Co.

GEORGE SAND

Drawn from life by Boilly.

The intimate friend of the poet Alfred de Musset and the composer, Chopin.

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"THE FIRST TEMPTATION OF ST. ANTHONY"

From the drawing by Katherine Low

" Arrives a white elephant, caparisoned in a golden net, shaking the tuft of ostrich feathers bound to his frontal. On his back, amidst blue woollen cushions, her legs crossed, her eyelids half closed, her head swaying, is a woman so splendidly attired that she sends forth rays on all sides of her; behind her, on the crupper, standing on one foot, is a negro, red-booted and with coral bracelets, he holds in his hand a great round leaf with which he fans her, grinning the while." —*Gustave Flaubert.*

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"THE FIRST TEMPTATION OF ST. ANTHONY"

From the drawing by Katherine Low.

"He fell at once into sin . . . he swerved his bleeding head before the face of Eve."—*Gustave Flaubert.*

MONS. HUGON DE SENNECTERRE"

From the drawing by Gustave Doré.

This current drawing illustrating *Persecutions d'Amour*, one of the *Contes Drolatiques*, is typical of several clever sketches by Doré contained in an early edition of Balzac's work.

Bovary are acute observation, understanding of the motives that actuate ordinary men and women, beauty of style, and skill in differentiating between one ordinary individual and any other ordinary individual.

Flaubert was prosecuted for having written an immoral book in *Madame Bovary;* but it is in effect ruthlessly moral in its insistence that men must live their lives in the circles of their destiny. It is only the fool who runs away from reality to a world of lath and plaster theatricalism that calls itself romance.

Between 1857 and 1861 Flaubert worked simultaneously at *The Temptation of St. Anthony* and *Salammbô*, which appeared in 1862. *The Sentimental Education* was published in 1869, and eight years later he brought out a volume of three short stories. The last months of his life were passed in writing *Bouvard and Pecuchet,* which was published after his death on May 8, 1880.

Flaubert, like Molière and Balzac, was never a member of the French Academy. Though the author of *Madame Bovary* must necessarily live in literary history as a master of realism, Flaubert was temperamentally a romantic. He loved colour and light, and was fascinated by the mysterious. He loved rhetoric as much as Victor Hugo loved it, and it is characteristic of him that after finishing *Madame Bovary,* a story of everyday France, he wrote *Salammbô,* in which he recreated the life of ancient Carthage. When he began to write this work he said to one of his friends: "I am tired of ugly things and vulgar surroundings. I am going to live for some years perhaps in a splendid subject and away from the modern world, of which I am sick." Here is the voice of the true romantic eager to escape from reality.

Flaubert's remarkable correspondence with George Sand was published after his death, and these letters help one to understand his peculiar interest as a literary artist.

His preoccupation with style was a confession of what seemed to him his comparative littleness. The task of finding the "right word" and the exactly appropriate sentence was a torture.

He says in a letter to George Sand, "You have no notion what it is to sit out an entire day with your head between your hands beating your unfortunate brains for a word." So eager was his interest in expression that in the end manner interested him entirely and matter not at all. He once wrote: "What I should like to write would be a book about nothing which would support itself by the internal force of style, as the earth is held in the air without being supported." But style without substance is chaos, and perhaps the most suggestive criticism of Flaubert's work is Wilfred Whitten's statement that Flaubert "never lacked substance, but he boiled it too long and watched the pot too long."

Flaubert has had an immense effect on the development of the art of fiction in France. The De Goncourts, Zola, and Daudet were his disciples, and there is hardly a considerable writer of modern fiction who has not looked to him as a master.

§ 4

Brothers de Goncourt

The Naturalist group of French novelists includes the brothers de Goncourt, Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and to some extent Alphonse Daudet and Joris Karl Huysmans. They professed to be the perfect disciples of Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert, recording the facts of life with photographic accuracy and rigorously avoiding any attempt at artistic setting. The brothers de Goncourt invented Naturalism just as they invented, or claimed to invent, symbolism.

Edmond de Goncourt was born in 1822 and lived till 1896. His younger brother Jules was born in 1830 and died in 1870. They were both men of enormous industry and varied artistic interests. They introduced Japanese art to France, and Edmond's last book was about Hokusai, the famous Japanese artist. They wrote monographs, they wrote essays on eighteenth-century French society, they wrote novels, and they wrote plays. The phrase "human document," now frequently used in literary

criticism, was first employed by the De Goncourts. Their characters were always studies from life—reproductions of actual persons whom they had known, and they took enormous pains to retain a photographic accuracy and not to allow anything to be added by their imagination. With this devotion to unqualified realism, the De Goncourts cultivated a curious style, inventing words and using such unusual epithets that since their deaths an industrious French scholar has compiled a dictionary to explain their meaning.

Renan said: "I fear that the self-sacrifice of our realistic writers, who say that their only purpose is to provide documents by which future ages will know us, will be poorly rewarded." It has, so far as the De Goncourts are concerned, for their novels are nowadays never read. They have, however, a considerable place in literary history, not only because they were the pioneers of Naturalism, but because of their *Journal,* which covers the period between 1851 and 1895, and in which the reader, while he is provided with much that is uninteresting and much that is scandalous and in execrable taste, is given an intimate literary history of middle nineteenth-century France. In the pages of the *Journal,* the reader meets Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, Victor Hugo, Ivan Turgenev, Émile Zola, Sainte-Beuve, Ernest Renan, Alphonse Daudet, as well as Sarah Bernhardt, Rejane, Clemenceau, Rodin, Pierre Loti, Anatole France, Alexandre Dumas (*père et fils*), Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde, and dozens of other well-known men and women. The observation is accurate, and there is probably no book in existence that gives so many life-like portraits of men whose personalities and achievements remain of perennial interest.

It is extraordinarily interesting to note that Naturalism, which began with a proclaimed devotion to Truth and soon ceased to concern itself with anything but that which was repellent and unpleasant, attracted writers who were physically weak and diseased. Jules de Goncourt died at forty, possibly to some extent

as a result of opiated cigars; Edmond was described by Sarcey, the famous French dramatic critic, as "a neurotic whom we must pity"; Zola was "sickly and neurotic"; Maupassant lost his reason when he was just over forty.

Edmond de Goncourt resented criticism, and was always unhappy because he and his brother were unappreciated. At the same time he had the most complete contempt for his contemporaries. The two brothers wrote in their diary in 1859:

> If I were really wealthy, I should have enjoyed making a collection of all the muck that celebrities with no talent have turned out. I should get the worst picture, the worst statue of this man and that, and pay their weight in gold. I should hand this collection over to the admiration of the middle classes, and after having enjoyed their stupid amazement at the tickets and the high prices of the objects, I should let myself go off into criticism composed of gall, science, and taste, until I foamed at the mouth.

As a matter of fact the De Goncourts were always foaming at the mouth.

Émile Zola

Émile Zola's father was half Italian and half Greek. Émile was born in Paris in 1840. His father died when he was a boy, and after years of terrible privations he obtained a clerkship in the publishing-house of Hachette, where he was paid a salary of a pound a week. This was in 1862; but three years before, an Aix-les-Bains newspaper had published a short story of his, described by Mr. Edmund Gosse as "a fairy tale about an enchanted bud of sweet marjoram, which expands and reveals the amorous fay, guardian of the loves of Prince Lois and the fair Odette"—a strange beginning for the author of *La Terre!* He followed this with other stories much in the same vein, with love-songs, hymns, and with an imitation of Dante. In 1864 he published a volume of his stories, all of them sentimental and idealistic.

Years afterwards Zola referred to his youth of struggle with extraordinary bitterness, for with all his gifts he was born without a sense of humour.

He first met the De Goncourts in 1868, and they described him as "restless, anxious, profound, complicated, reserved, and not easily understood." He had already conceived the idea of his Rougon-Macquart series of novels, at which he worked for nearly thirty years. His idea was to describe in accurate detail the life of the members of a commonplace family, extenuating nothing and setting down nothing in malice. Each novel in the series deals with one aspect of everyday life: the *Ventre de Paris* with the markets; *L'Assommoir* with the drinking-shops; *La Bête Humaine* with the railways; *Germinal* with the mines; *L'Argent* with the world of finance; *La Débâcle* with the horrors of 1870; *Lourdes* with what seemed to him the superstition of religion. He has himself summarised his ambition:

> I am going to take a family and study its members one by one—whence they come, whither they are going, how they react upon each other. A bit of humanity apart, the way in which men act and behave. On the other hand, I will put my characters in a particular historical period which will give me the environment and condition—a bit of history.

His aim, that is, was to give a complete picture of the time in which he lived. But he failed. As M. Jean Carrère has said, he depicted only the vices and the weaknesses of the time:

> Unbalanced men, scoundrels, thieves, prostitutes, drunkards, stupid dreamers, unhealthy peasants, degraded workers, unclean bourgeois, cowardly soldiers, avaricious ministers, feeble artists, hysterical priests—all this is offered to us as a mirror of human nature. Not a single great man, not an elect soul, not a noble and strong individuality, not a hero—that is supposed to be the measure of our time. No joy, no triumphant effort, not a single healthy development —this is a picture of our life. We are promised a world, and

we get a hospital. Surely this is incredible ignorance or incredible perversity!

Zola was a prodigious worker. His life was darkened by disappointments, most of all, oddly enough, by his failure to be elected to the Academy. His literary style has no great merit, but there is in some of his novels, particularly in *Le Rêve,* and in the well-known short story *L'Attaque du Moulin,* a suggestion of pity and sentiment that would seem to show that at heart Zola was an idealist and a romantic, and that Mr. Edmund Gosse may be justified in his assertion that it is in his little-known short stories that "the most genuine and characteristic productions of his pen are to be found."

Pity and love of justice are certainly the note of Zola's personal life. He led the agitation in France at the end of the nineteenth century on behalf of the unfortunate Captain Dreyfus, denouncing in his famous letter, *J'Accuse,* the men who had hounded down Dreyfus, with magnificent vehemence and indignation.

Zola died in 1902, and Anatole France delivered a fervent eulogy over his grave. Perhaps the most accurate description of Zola as a writer ever made was Mr. George Moore's assertion that he was "a striking instance of the insanity of common-sense."

Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant was born in 1850. Like Flaubert, he was a Norman, and his great compatriot helped him a great deal at the beginning of his literary life. Maupassant was perhaps the greatest master of the short story who has ever lived, and it is a remarkable fact that the first short story of his ever published, *La Boule de Suif,* has rarely been equalled either by himself or any other writer. Maupassant's literary life lasted only ten years, during which he wrote many short stories and half a dozen novels. It has been said of him that he destroyed Naturalism because he carried it to its ultimate point. He professed to have

no invention, but merely to reproduce men and life as he saw them. Unfortunately, the world that he saw was very unpleasant and the men and women in it generally repulsive.

Maupassant is almost as great a stylist as Flaubert. He always sought for the right word, and never used an unnecessary one, and the gloom of his Naturalism is made tolerable by an ironic humour which neither the De Goncourts nor Zola possessed. Maupassant drugged himself. Soon after his fortieth birthday he became morbidly depressed. He was seized with general paralysis, became insane, and died in 1893.

Alphonse Daudet

Alphonse Daudet was born in 1840. His father was an unsuccessful trader. When he was sixteen Alphonse was compelled to become an usher in a school, and was thoroughly unhappy. After a year he contrived to get to Paris, where almost at once he obtained a small position on the staff of the *Figaro.*

After a year or two in Paris, Daudet became secretary to the Duc de Morny, half brother of Napoleon III, a position he held till 1865. By this time he had established a considerable literary reputation by his famous *Les Rois en Exil.* This book was followed by *Tartarin de Tarascon, Sapho,* and *La Mortelle.* Daudet has sometimes been called the French Dickens, and there is a definite suggestion of the English Master in a book of his called *Le Petit Chose.* His naturalism, for what it is worth, is to be found in the fact that the central figures of many of his books are real persons very thinly disguised: thus, the Duc de Morny is concealed in the *Nabob,* Gambetta is the hero of *Numa Roumestan,* and *La Mortelle* is an attack on the members of the Academy, many of the characters and incidents being taken from life. It is safe to prophesy that Daudet's Tartarin will live in the memory as long as Mr. Pickwick. He himself declared that Tartarin was "a serious presentation of the South of France—a broader figure of Don Quixote." Daudet belonged to the South,

and in Tartarin he has given the world a burlesque type of his own people as memorable as Sam Weller. There are, by the way, many resemblances to Dickens in the Daudet novels.

Like Zola, Daudet was a prodigious worker. He would often start writing at four in the morning and go on till eight, then from nine till twelve, from two till six, and again from eight till midnight. Daudet was a very happy man. His married life was fortunate; his home life was delightful; his friends were many—even the sour Edmond de Goncourt never found anything but good to say of him. Daudet died in Paris on December 17, 1897.

Joris Karl Huysmans was born in 1848. His family was of Dutch extraction, and he spent the greater part of his life in the French civil service. His first novel was published in 1876, and all his work until 1884 was Zolaesque in its minute, uncompromising, and relentless realism. In 1884 he published his remarkable book, *A Rebours,* an elaborately morbid study of a decadent aristocrat. This was followed by a study of Satanism, and then by Huysmans' masterpiece, *En Route,* in which he describes the conversion of a hero, modelled on himself, to Catholicism and extreme mysticism. The Naturalist turned mystic is still more evident in *La Cathédrale.*

Huysmans died in 1907. It is curiously in accord with the morbidity of his novels that Huysmans was all his life a martyr to neuralgia and dyspepsia.

§ 5

Hippolyte Taine

The most famous French literary critic of the nineteenth century after the era of Sainte-Beuve and Théophile Gautier was Hippolyte Taine, who was born in 1828 and died in 1893. He wrote a history of English literature, a history of French nineteenth-century philosophers, and a great book which he called *The Origins of Contemporary France.* Both in method

TARTARIN OF TARASCON

From a drawing by Kathleen Shackleton

"Tartarin ensconced himself, one knee on the ground, a hundred steps in front of the temple, with rifle in hand."—*Daudet.*

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

RENAN

From the painting by Bonnat.

The great French nineteenth century philosopher and critic.

and in manner Taine may be compared to Macaulay, to whom he obviously owed much.

Auguste Comte, who was born in 1796 and died in 1857, was the founder of Positivism. He remains the best known of nineteenth-century philosophers, interesting to English readers from the influence he exercised on Frederick Harrison.

The three best-known French historians of this period are Louis Adolphe Thiers, who was born in 1797 and died in 1877, and who was the first President of the Third Republic—perhaps more politician than historian; another politician-historian, François Guizot; and, by far the greatest, Jules Michelet (1798-1874), whose history of the French Revolution is unrivalled in its comprehensiveness, lucidity, and interest. Michelet hated England, French aristocracy, and all Catholics. In his power of making the past live in the present he is worthy to be compared with Carlyle.

Ernest Renan

Apart from the poets and novelists, by far the most interesting figure in the nineteenth-century literature of France is Ernest Renan. Renan was born in 1823 in a small and remote Breton seaport. His father was a retail grocer and all his family were as poor as Job. The elder Renan was drowned when his son was a child of five, and the family for twenty years was maintained by his sister Henriette, to whom more than to any other person Renan owed the chances of his later life. He was sent to a clerical school, where, as he said, the priests taught him "the love of truth, respect for reason, and the seriousness of life." When he was fifteen and a half he was sent to a seminary in Paris, where he studied for seven years with the idea of entering the priesthood. He hesitated, however, before taking subdeacon's orders, which would have compelled him to celibacy and bound him irrevocably to the service of the Church. He had been influenced by German philosophical writings and was attracted by

Protestantism. His state of mind is expressed in a letter he wrote in 1845 to his sister, then a governess in Poland: "One must be a Christian, but one must be orthodox." His sincerity and his devotion to what he considered truth compelled him to leave the seminary and accept a position as usher in a private school, the change being made possible by a gift of fifty pounds out of his sister's savings.

Although Renan abandoned his religion, he never resembled Voltaire in scoffing at the tenets of Christianity or at its priests. All through his life, indeed, he looked back to his early teachers with admiration and affection, declaring that in the seminary "there was enough virtue to govern the world." His first series of essays was published in 1857. In 1862 he was appointed Professor of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldean in the College of France, and he held this position till his death thirty years later, except for a short interregnum in 1864, when he was dismissed by Napoleon III, who had a pious objection to the heterodoxy of Renan's famous *Life of Jesus.*

Renan's best-remembered writings are the *Life of Jesus,* the *Origins of Christianity,* and the *History of the People of Israel.* He was the master of a gracious and exquisite style, and he has served as a model for most of the later French writers of distinction, notably for Anatole France and Pierre Loti.

The *Life of Jesus* is the work of a reverent sceptic, doubting miracles but filled with admiration for the life and teaching of the Founder of Christianity. It is a book of great beauty, and is in striking contrast to the German sceptic Strauss's *Life of Jesus,* which George Eliot translated into English.

§ 6

Alfred de Musset

The youngest member of Victor Hugo's circle was, according to an eye-witness, "a pretty boy, with slim figure and flaxen hair, wide nostrils, and lips of vermilion red. His face, of high colour and oval shape, was remarkable for the fact that the place

of the eyebrows was taken by what seemed two semi-circles of a blood-red tint. After dinner he entertained the company with a most life-like imitation of a drunken man." This strange Benjamin was Alfred de Musset, then aged about thirteen.

The boy was born in Paris in the year 1810. His father was of noble birth and himself a writer of some note. It was Victor Hugo who first encouraged the young poet, but he grew up rather in the school of Byron, whose works he knew by heart. The ease and grace of Byron in *Don Juan*, the light touch of humour, the sudden rocket-towering into heights of poetry, the regions of romance, all find their counterpart in *Mardoche* and *Namouna*. But it is strange that what chiefly roused the critics was a trifle—the verses in *The Ballad of the Moon:*

> C'était, dans la nuit brune,
> Sur le clocher jauni, la lune,
> Comme un point sur un *i*.

To say that the moon stood above the steeple like a dot above an *i*, offended the romantics as too realistic, and the realists as too fantastic. The pother was extraordinary, considering the cause.

These early verses had no great depth of feeling. But after 1833, when he ran away to Venice with George Sand—or George Sand ran away with him—after their electric life and bitter parting, his whole nature seemed to change, to deepen. The passion of love, rage, and jealousy, the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind, seemed to rend his very soul like devils. He set himself, like Byron still, to move the pity of the world with "the pageant of his bleeding heart." The most cruel of his love-pangs were beyond singing: "If I tried them on my lyre," he tells us, "they would break it like a reed." But he allowed himself to listen to milder invitations of the Muse.

Such lines as those from *A Night of May*, in which every piece of imagery is penetrated with the power of charm, of the mystery of romance, are alone sufficient to display the whole gift of De Musset at its best. It is a gift of pure enchantment. Some

of his lesser songs are also gems of purest beauty. Here is one, of which some glimmer may perhaps shine through the veil of a translation:

Remember, when the Dawn throws open wide
Her grand enchanted palace to the Sun:
Remember, when the Night, the pensive-eyed,
Comes dreaming under veils all silver-spun;
When thy bosom beats high with a pleasure supreme,
When twilight allures thee to brood and to dream,
Hark! The forest profound
Has a voice in its sound—
"Remember!"

Remember me, when, nevermore distressed,
This heart of mine shall slumber in the tomb;
Remember, when above its house of rest
Softly a solitary flower shall bloom.
Thou wilt see me more, but my spirit shall be,
Like a sister beloved, for ever with thee.
When the midnight is nigh
Thou shalt hear a voice sigh,
"Remember!"

§ 7

Théophile Gautier

Théophile Gautier was born at Tarbes in 1811, but came to Paris early. There he started life in a garret, and spent his days in the picture-galleries, where he would sit for hours, entranced and motionless, before a painting or a statue, feeding his soul with the beauty of colour and of form. Beauty-worship was with him a sole consuming passion, indeed a kind of monomania. Alfred de Musset, love-sick angel, singing songs of passion infinitely sweet and bitter, could lose his heart to a plain woman like George Sand. Now, it is very certain that Gautier, who looked upon a woman as a breathing statue, could never have fallen in love with one of them whose knees were not clean-cut.

Urged by his rage for plastic beauty he resolved at first to

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DE SIGOGNAC AND VALLOMBREUSE

From the drawing by Victor A. Searles.

Photo. Rischgitz Collection

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Poet, novelist, and critic.

VERLAINE THE POET OF ABSINTHE

The greatest of modern French poets lived a miserable sordid life. Swinburne's line in the *Ballad of François Villon*, might well be applied to him: "Shame soiled thy song and song assoiled thy shame!"

be a painter. But his dreams of loveliness refused to body forth upon the canvas. He threw away his brushes and turned to the other art of words, in which he was destined to become one of the supreme masters of the world. While he earned his living by a sort of inspired journalism, he was bringing into being poems and romances of which every line is like a brush-stroke on a painting or a chisel-touch upon a statue. It may be said, in passing, that the most picturesque of poets was also one of the most picturesque of men. Tall, massive, with a head like Jupiter's majestic and yet kindly, with his love-locks streaming down his back, strolling down the boulevards in yellow slippers and black velvet vest, his bare head shadowed by a parasol, he was a spectacle to fill the eye.

His ideals in art, whether poetry or painting, were entirely Greek. As he himself said, in a fine passage on Greek art, which will serve us also as an excellent example of his style:

> It prefers a statue to a phantom, and full noon to twilight. Free from mist and vapour, admitting nothing visionary or uncertain, its least details stand out sharply, strong in form and colour. Its dreams are of long cavalcades of milk-white steeds, ridden by lovely naked youths, defiling past against a ground of azure, as upon the friezes of the Parthenon—or of processions of young girls, crowned with garlands and apparelled in strait tunics, bearing in their hands their ivory timbrels, and seeming as if they moved round an enormous urn. The mountains of its landscapes rise up sharp-edged against the sky, the sun reposing on the loftiest peaks, and opening wide, like a resting lion, his golden-lidded eye. Its clouds are shaped and cut, like marble splinters. Its streams fall in sculptured waves from the mouths of sculptured urns. Its shadows gather, dark-massed, beneath its trees. Between its tall reeds, green and vocal as those of Eurotas, glance the round and silvery flanks of a green-haired naiad; or between its sombre oaks Diana passes with arrow-sheaf and flying scarf, followed by her nymphs and yelping hounds.

It was Swinburne who, in a happy phrase, spoke of Gautier's "clean chryselephantine verse"—referring to the gold and ivory in which the great Greek sculptors wrought their statues of the gods. It is to Swinburne also that we owe a paraphrase of one of Gautier's songs, which, in its capture of the very style and spirit of the lines, could only be achieved by as great a poet as the author:

We are in love's land to-day;
  Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
  Or shall we row? . . .

Our seamen are fledged loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
  Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
  And manifold.
    We are in love's land to-day.

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
  Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
  Or flowers of foam?
    We are in love's land to-day.

These verses are from *Enamels and Cameos,* the volume which contains the finest of all Gautier's poems. Many of these have taken rank among the treasures of French poetry—for example, *A Symphony in White Major* and *Art.* In the first of these he set himself to write a poem in which everything is white, just as Keats wrote a sonnet on the colour blue. It is a portrait of a lady, robed in white, her bosom whiter than its white camellias, even as the naked forms of the swan-maidens in the fairy story were whiter than the feathers they threw off to bathe—whiter than a glacier in the moonlight, than the silver of a lily-petal,

the frost-flowers on the pane, the icicle that glimmers in a cavern, the sphinx that Winter carves out of the Alpine snow. So she sits at her piano, her hands whiter than the ivory keys. Icy-hearted, implacable in whiteness, when shall a lover flush her into rose?

Art is Gautier's creed. Verse of the strictest form and finish is alone eternal, just as a profile of Apollo is of finer and more lasting beauty cut in agate than in clay. The carven bust survives the city, the coin a labourer turns up reveals a time-forgotten emperor, a gem of verse is more immortal than the gods.

Sculpte, lime, cisele;
Que ton rêve flottant
Se scelle
Dans le bloc résistant!

It was in the resisting block of chiselled verse that Gautier sealed his dreams.

He died in the year 1872.

§ 8

Leconte de Lisle

Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle was born in 1818 at St. Paul, Réunion Island, and made several voyages before he came to Paris at the age of twenty-nine. He was a fine scholar, a great student and translator of the classics, and his volume of poetry, *Antique Poems,* depicted, very much in the manner of Gautier, the figures and scenes of ancient Greece. But he was a child of the tropics; his own peculiar regions were not classic, but barbaric; and *Barbaric Poems* was in fact the title of his next volume. The wild and solitary places of the world are his peculiar ground. He loves the rich and coloured East, with all its pictures, from the oasis where the Bedouin ties his mare beneath the solitary date-palm, to the verandah with the silver trellis and the scarlet cushions where the Persian beauty, lulled by the music of the porphyry fountains, watches the blue smoke of her hookah

in the jasmin-scented air. He knows the desert where the herds of elephants pass ghost-like in the moonlight, and the glade of jungle where the jaguar rests at noon. He has beheld upon its rock the black tower of Runoia amidst the everlasting Polar snows. He has marked the priest of Brahma, with the girdle of white muslin round his loins of amber, sitting cross-armed in trance beneath his fig-tree. He has watched the condor float above the peaks of Chimborazo. He has entered the cavern where the cuddled cubs of the black panther mew among the shining bones.

Leconte de Lisle is famous for his study of wild animals. Here is a picture of a tiger—a piece well known to his admirers:

> Under the tall dry grass, where the rosy naja-blossom unfolds in its golden spiral to the sun, the formidable beast, the dweller of the jungle, sleeps upon his back with claws dilating. Out of his striped jaws his hot breath smokes and his rough red tongue is lolling. Round his repose all noise is stilled; the pantheress crawls, with arched back, on the watch; the sinewy python with the scales of agate thrusts his flat head from below the prickly nopals; and where his flight has made a glittering circle in the air the cantharides darts to and fro around the broad-striped king.

From this picture of the noonday jungle the poem changes, like a scene on a dissolving view, to the same at twilight. The air grows chill and stirs the grass-tops; the tiger wakens, lifts his head, and listens for the tread of the gazelles, if any chance to seek the hidden brooklet where the bamboos lean above the lotus-blossoms. But no sound is in the air; and rising from the grass with stretching jaws, he sends a melancholy growl into the night.

As a study of what we may call the picturesquely horrible there are few more striking pictures than that of the Brahmin hermit in the long poem *Çunacépa*—a splendid specimen of narrative verse. To read it is to see the holy man in person, sitting

in silence, like a rough-hewn idol—his glittering hollow eyes, his limbs like iron bars, his nails that curve into the flesh, his hair, a mass of filth and brambles, falling to his knees. The manner in which this story is related is rich and vivid beyond all description.

Leconte de Lisle does not often seek variety of metre. The grand and splendid Alexandrine seems his natural measure. But sometimes he works in shorter lines, and with the happiest effect. In the last of the three studies called *Les Clairs de Lune,* there is an exquisite example. The poem is a sea-scene; it represents an ocean at the hour of twilight, grey, calm, and vast, beneath a starless sky. Very gradually, towards the East, a white light breaks the mist above the sea-line:

> Un feu pâle luit et déferle,
> La mer frémit, s'ouvre un moment,
> Et, dans le ciel couleur de perle,
> *La lune monte lentement.*

The line, for all its mellow intonation, compels itself to be read slowly, in correspondence with the slowly dawning moon.

Leconte de Lisle died in 1894.

§ 9

Charles Baudelaire

Charles Baudelaire, born in Paris, 1821—he died in 1867—was a rich man and able to devote his life to poetry. Yet nearly all his poems are contained within a single volume, bearing the apt title of *The Flowers of Evil.* He was neither a painter-poet nor a seeker after things of beauty. He preferred a black Venus to a white one. A slum-girl, with her sickly freckled body peeping through her tatters, "had her sweetness." He was a great student of De Quincey, and in truth the perfume of these Flowers of Evil has something of the scent of opium. His poetry is full of images of ugliness and horror, of the haggard spectres of insomnia, of the terror that walks by night, of the phantom forms that haunt the darkest caverns of the soul.

When he attempts a picture the result has no resemblance to nature. Thus, in *A Dream of Paris,* we have a city built of metal and of marble, rigid, polished, with colossal palaces and colonnades, Babel towers and terraces, shining by their own strange light, cascades that fall like crystal curtains, while stretches of blue waters, like steel mirrors, reflecting giant water-maidens, glimmer under bridges built of jewels, or by the side of quays of lucid porphyry. In the phrase of Gautier, "the very style of the whole poem seems to glitter like black marble."

He was, beyond all others, the poet, not of pictures but of perfumes. He had, in early youth, made a voyage to the Islands of the Indian Ocean, where the scents and savours of the tropics, amber, spikenard, incense, seem to have soaked into his being. "My soul floats on perfumes," he said himself, "as the souls of other men on music." He compared his work to an old flagon covered with cobwebs in a cupboard in a deserted house. The cupboard, opened, sends forth a faint scent of musk and lavender, of robes and laces, powder-boxes, souvenirs of ancient loves and times—but from the antique flagon comes a perfume sharp and strange which the world has never known before.

§ 10

Paul Verlaine

Verlaine may justly be described as the most singular individual who ever gained a poet's fame. So ugly that women cried out in terror at the sight of him as if face to face with a baboon, steeped to the lips in absinthe, at one time in jail for shooting a friend, and at another for assaulting his mother, dying at last in a garret, a wreck in body and soul, this wild being yet produced a long series of poems which, in their utter simplicity of beauty, seem made for an angel of heaven to murmur to his harp.

He was born in 1844 at Metz, but lived in Paris, where he died in 1896. He inherited a little money, which was fortunate,

for his poems, for many years, were printed at his own expense. They appeared in a succession of tiny volumes; the first under the title of *Saturnian Poems*—poems born under Saturn, the melancholy star. But theirs is a melancholy sweet and charming. Very typical, for example, is the sonnet *After Three Years*. It tells how he pushed back the broken gate and walked into the little garden. Nothing had changed. The same calm sunlight set in every flower a dewy sparkle. Above the rustic seat the wild-vine trellis still hung in veils of shadowy green. The fountain still kept up its silvery murmur and the ancient aspen whispered its eternal sighs. As of old, the roses, the tall lilies, rocked in air. It seemed as if it were the same lark singing. Even the antique statue, scaling flakes of plaster, stood unaltered, amid the faint sweet plots of mignonette.

In his next volume, *Fêtes Galantes,* he is, for the time being, in another world—a world like that of Watteau's pictures, where lords and ladies, with their masks and mandolines, black pages and tame monkeys, mix with harlequins and columbines, among clipped yews and marble statues by the side of moonlit fountains. But this is not his own true world at all. His real themes were the joys and sorrows of his own strange soul. But whatever he expresses—hymns, love-songs, drinking-catches—his thoughts in hospital, in jail—his sins, his follies, or his dreams—all were uttered in a verse of music as sweet and simple as an aria of Mozart. But the moment a translator lays a finger on it the whole charm is broken, "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

O triste, triste était mon âme
A cause, à cause d'une femme.

"My soul was sad for the sake of a woman"—that is all the *theme* of these two lines. But where is the music, the magic, which will not let them be forgotten?

Let us take another lyric. "The sky above the roof is calm

and blue—a tree is rocking—a spire against the sky is softly chiming—a plaintive bird is singing—from the city comes a peaceful murmur—life there is simple, tranquil. You, who go by weeping, what have you done with your youth?"

Such is the theme—in prose. And now for the transfiguring verse:

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme!
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,
Berce sa palme.

La cloche dans le ciel qu'on voit
Doucement tinte.
Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit
Chante sa plainte.

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là,
Simple et tranquille.
Cette paisible rumeur-là
Vient de la ville.

—Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà
Pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi qui voilà
De ta jeunesse?

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XXXIV

THE GREAT VICTORIANS

THE GREAT VICTORIANS

CARLYLE, MACAULAY, RUSKIN

§ 1

Thomas Carlyle

CARLYLE was a Puritan, and if he were not a Puritan he was nothing. He was as Puritan as Cromwell and as Bunyan, and far more Puritan than Milton. He abandoned the letter of the faith in which he was brought up, but he taught what Froude has called "Calvinism without the theology." English Puritanism was to him "the last of our heroisms." In writing of the "hero as priest," he took Luther and John Knox as his subjects, and the practices of Catholicism were sneered at by him as "Puseyisms and other such ghosts and apparitions in winding sheets."

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, near Dumfries, on December 4, 1795. His father, James Carlyle, was a working mason, and Thomas was the eldest of a family of nine children. His parents were both persons of strong character. He was first sent to the village school and afterwards to a grammar school, and as he was evidently a boy of unusual ability his father decided that he should go to Edinburgh University to be prepared for the Presbyterian Ministry. Carlyle walked to Edinburgh, a distance of a hundred miles, and arrived there about a month before his fifteenth birthday. In the usual manner of the poor Scots student Carlyle earned his living as a teacher while he was pursuing his divinity course. In 1817 he

decided that it was impossible for him to be a minister. In the years that followed Carlyle wrote odd articles, almost starved, and incidentally learned German, perhaps the most significant happening of his early life. Goethe and Jean Paul Richter opened a new world for him, and from them he learned the excessive Teutonism which modelled his style as a writer, and fundamentally influenced him as a thinker.

In 1822 Carlyle came to London as tutor to the sons of a rich Anglo-Indian. In 1825 he met Jane Baillie Welsh, whom he married in the following year. After his marriage, Carlyle lived for a while in Edinburgh writing critical essays, the most memorable of which was his essay on Burns. The Carlyles were very poor and in 1834 they decided to try their fortune in London. They took up their residence at 5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea, where Carlyle spent the rest of his life. His *French Revolution* was published in 1837; *Sartor Resartus*, which had appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* before he left Scotland, was published as a book in 1838; *Heroes and Hero Worship* in 1841, *Past and Present* in 1843, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* in 1845, *Latter Day Pamphlets* in 1850, and the *History of Frederick the Great* from 1858 to 1865. Carlyle died in Cheyne Row on February 5, 1881, and was buried among his own people at Ecclefechan.

Perhaps the greatest misfortune of Carlyle's life was his friendship with J. A. Froude, whom he made his literary executor, and who published his *Reminiscences* after his death, a book good enough to read, but which bristles with harsh judgments on contemporaries, far more damaging to the author's reputation than to the reputations of the men with whom he dealt. Some years later Froude published, with doubtful propriety, letters of Mrs. Carlyle. There is no reason why the world should be admitted behind the screen that hides the intimacies of domestic life. Carlyle was a hard man to live with. His wife was gently bred. He remained a peasant. He was a

chronic dyspeptic, ill-tempered, given to grumbling and nagging. An estrangement occurred between Carlyle and his wife after they had been married many years, but, quick-tempered and sharp-tongued, she was yet proud of him and certainly patient and thrifty and loyal, while he was almost pathetically dependent on her, always consulting her and grumblingly taking her advice. Carlyle was a literary genius. There are probably few women less to be envied than the wives of literary geniuses, and it is best to leave it at that.

In the history of literature there are no writers to whom Carlyle can be said to have so much affinity as the Hebrew Prophets. He was a modern Jeremiah, and much of his writing can be described as nineteenth-century "Lamentations." His philosophy has been summarised by the late W. S. Lilly:

> He divided mankind into two classes—the wise few, and the unwise many who have men's susceptibilities, appetites, and capabilities, but not the insights and higher virtues of men. And not the unwise many, but the wise few, he taught, were the rightful rulers, the divinely appointed guides of mankind. This is, in substance, his doctrine of great men. To the cult of majorities he opposed the cult of superiorities; to the rule of the multitude, the necessity of loyalty and obedience. Carlyle conceived of a hero as a man who has received a divine mission and who triumphantly carries it out, at all perils; whether in captivity, like Moses; in the cloister, like Abbot Samson; on the field of battle, like Cromwell.

Writing of John Knox and his heroes and hero-worship, Carlyle is brave enough to defend intolerance. He says:

> Tolerance has to tolerate the unessential; and to see well what that is. Tolerance has to be noble, measured, just in its very wrath, when it can tolerate no longer. But, on the whole, we are not altogether here to tolerate. We

> are here to resist, to control, and to vanquish withal. We do not tolerate Falsehoods, Iniquities when they fasten on us; we say to them, Thou art false and unjust, We are here to extinguish falsehoods and put an end to them in some wise way.

The Carlylean hero-worship is an anticipation of the doctrine of the superman preached by Gobineau and Nietzsche. It is the antithesis of democracy. Carlyle hated cruelty and injustice as much as he hated hypocrisy and shams. He sympathised with the weak and the unfortunate. But his sympathy was always patronising, for to him his fellows were "mostly fools." He had many friends, though it may be suggested that friendship for him was never deep, and that his acquaintance tolerated his ill-manners for the sake of his genius. Emerson, Tennyson, and John Stuart Mill were more or less intimate with him. He appreciated Dickens, but he cared neither for Scott nor for Keats nor for Charles Lamb. How the gentle Elia must have been terrorised by the disgruntled dyspeptic Scotsman! To him Heine was nothing but a blackguard, and he sneeringly referred to Coleridge as a "puffy, anxious, abstracted-looking, fatish old man." The tragedy of expecting the world to be saved by heroes and supermen is that they are both hard to find, and that in searching for the hero we are apt to miss the heroic in the commonplace.

He had a consuming hatred of all shams and cant of every kind, and his unfortunate tendency to find "shams" was a weakness in his character. In a famous sketch of Mirabeau he wrote:

> Honour to the strong man, in these ages, who has shaken himself loose of shams, and *is* something. For in the way of being *worthy,* the first condition surely is that one *be.* Let Cant cease, at all risks and at all costs: till Cant cease, nothing else can begin. Of human Criminals, in these centuries, writes the Moralist, I find but one unforgivable: the

ECCLEFECHAN

The house of James Carlyle, the stonemason. Here his son Thomas was born in 1795.

I have given up the notion of hawking my
little Manuscript Book about any further: for a long
time it has lain quiet in its drawer, waiting for a
better day. The Bookselling trade seems on the edge of
dissolution, the force of Puffing can go no further, yet
Bankruptcy clamours at every door. Sad fate! To serve
the Devil, and get no wages even from him! — The
brave Bookseller Guild, I often hinted to myself, will ere
long be found unfit for the strange part it now plays
in our European world; and give place to new and
higher Arrangements, of which the coming shadows
are already becoming visible. More of this by another
opportunity

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

PART OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY CARLYLE, IN 1832, IN WHICH HE ALLUDES TO HIS FAILURE TO FIND A PUBLISHER FOR HIS *SARTOR RESARTUS*

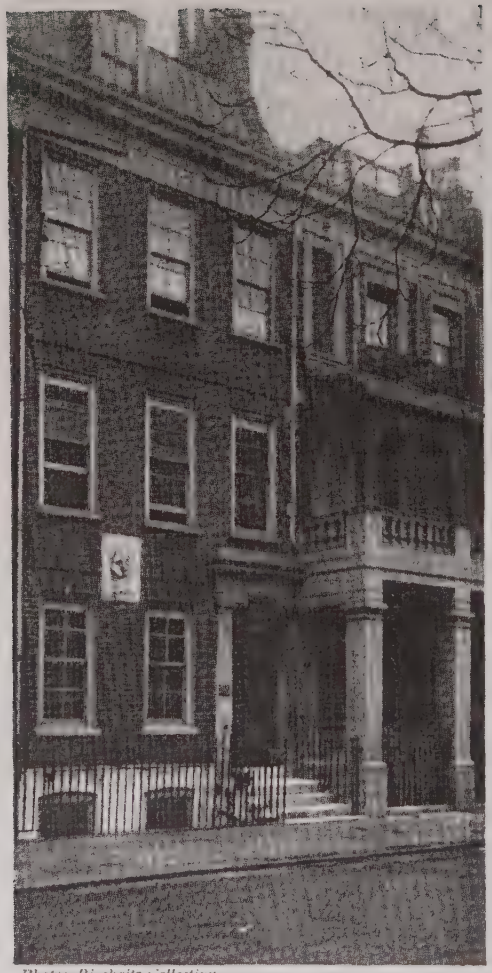

Photo: Rischeits Collection.

CARLYLE'S HOUSE (5, NOW 24, CHEYNE ROW) AT CHELSEA

Here he lived from 1834 till his death and the old house remains as a place of pilgrimage for all admirers of the Sage.

THE GRAVE OF THOMAS CARLYLE AT ECCLEFECHAN

CRAIGENPUTTOCK

The small property of Jane Welsh in the moorlands of Dumfries. Here Carlyle lived for six years after his marriage to its proprietress

Quack. "Hateful to God," as divine Dante sings, "and to the enemies of God:

"A Dio spiacente ed a' nemici sui!"

But whoever will, with sympathy, which is the first essential towards insight, look at this questionable Mirabeau, may find that there lay verily in him, as the basis of all, a Sincerity, a great free Earnestness; nay, call it Honesty, for the man did before all things see, with that clear flashing vision, into what *was,* into what existed as fact; and did, with his wild heart, follow that and no other. Whereby on what ways soever he travels and struggles, often enough falling, he is still a brother man. Hate him not; thou canst not hate him! Shining through such soil and tarnish, and now victorious effulgent, and oftenest struggling eclipsed, the light of genius itself is in this man; which was never yet base and hateful; but at worst was lamentable, lovable with pity. They say that he was ambitious, that he wanted to be Minister. It is most true. And was he not simply the one man in France who could have done any good as Minister? Not vanity alone, not pride alone; far from that! Wild burstings of affection were in this great heart; of fierce lightning, and soft dew of pity.

Carlyle preached the doctrine of work. "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness." He prophesied the arrival of a day when the man with no work to do "will not find it good to shew himself in our corner of the solar system." Efficient work means discipline, and Carlyle, always a Prussian at heart, was in favour of compulsory military service, not only as protection, but as national training. One does not begin to understand Carlyle without keeping in mind that in culture and in prejudice he was emphatically German. He was decidedly the spiritual child of Germany, learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany.

Victorian England was definitely pro-German. This was,

of course, largely due to the influence of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. But it was also largely due to Carlyle, whose influence on his contemporaries was greater than that of any other Victorian writer. Ruskin was his pupil, and every thinking young man came under his influence. The great writer has an enormous influence on the trend of history, and Carlyle is unquestionably one of the key figures of the nineteenth century. As Mr. Chesterton has said: "He told Englishmen that they were Teutons, that they were Vikings, that they were practical politicians—all the things they like to be told they are, all the things that they are not." It was a failing of Carlyle that he took things too terribly in earnest, but his bitterness and ferocity are but tokens of the strength of his sympathies.

Carlyle's style was all his own. The great artist who has really something to say invariably invents the best possible way of saying it. Carlyle wrote in an English that no other man has ever written—a Teutonised English, an English that he learned from the Germans. But he could have expressed himself in no other language.

Professor Saintsbury has described his style thus:

> Its characteristics, like those of nearly all great styles, are partly obvious, partly recondite, or altogether fugitive, even from the most acute and persevering investigation. In the lowest place come the mechanical devices of capitals—a revival, of course, of an old habit—italics, dashes, and other resources to the assistance of the printer. Next may be ranked certain stenographic tricks as regards grammar—the omission of conjunctions, pronouns, and generally all parts of speech which, by relying strictly on the reader's ability to perceive the meaning without them, can be omitted, and the omission of which gives point and freshness to the whole and emphasises those words which are left. Next and higher come exotic, and specially German, constructions, long compound adjectives, unusual comparatives and superlatives like "beautifuller," unsparing employment of

that specially English idiom by which, as it has been hyperbolically said, every verb can be made a noun and every noun a verb, together with a certain, though not very large, admixture of actual neologisms and coinings like "Gigmanity." Farther still from the mechanical is the art of arrangement in order of words and juxtaposition of clauses, cadence and rhythm of phrase, all of which go so far to make up style in the positive. And beyond these again comes the indefinable part, the part which always remains and defies analysis.

Considering him as a writer, Mr. Birrell says:

> He resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice and spreading into cool expanses below; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright? It is with the radiance of the sun.

§ 2

"The French Revolution"

The French Revolution is Carlyle's masterpiece. The story, vivid and dramatic, is told with a magnificent picturesqueness. Carlyle makes history a very live thing. He has a genius for character sketches. He makes his characters real with one vivid phrase. Robespierre, "the sea-green incorruptible"; Danton, "a gigantic mass of valour"; Barras, "a man of heat and haste"; Marat (who by the way he entirely misjudges), the "hapless squalid." There is perhaps no finer passage in the *French Revolution* than the end of the chapter in which Carlyle describes the murder of Marat by Charlotte Corday and her execution at the Place de la Révolution.

The history contains many splendid passages—the storming of the Bastille and the description of the unfortunate banquet

at Versailles, for instance—but it has been charged with being at times a little unjust. Carlyle, says Professor Saintsbury, "may almost be said to have been the first to present historic characters 'realised' after the fashion of the novelist, but with limitation to fact. In other words, he wrote history as Shakespeare long before and Scott in his own time wrote drama or romance, though he tasked his imagination not to create but to vivify and rearrange the particulars."

The French Revolution was written during the early days of Carlyle's residence in London, and was as he said his "last throw." He lent the manuscript of the first volume to Mill to read, and, without Carlyle's permission, he lent it to Mrs. Taylor, whom Carlyle has described as "pale and passionate and sad-looking, a living romance heroine, of the Royalist volition and questionable destiny." The manuscript was accidentally burned by Mrs. Taylor's servant! Carlyle had kept no notes and could not recall a sentence that he had written, and he had to begin all over again. He always believed that the first version was the best, but Mrs. Carlyle preferred the second. "It is a little less vivacious," she said, "but better thought and put together."

It was Carlyle's special gift, as Froude says, "to bring dead things and dead people actually back to life; to make the past once more the present, and to show us men and women playing their parts on the mortal stage as real flesh-and-blood, human creatures, with every feature which he ascribes to them authenticated, not the most trifling incident invented, and yet as a result with figures as completely alive as Shakespeare's own."

Here was a new kind of history, a vivid, dramatic spectral thing of immense power embodying all the Carlylean doctrine.

"The style," wrote Froude, "which troubled others, and troubled himself when he thought about it, was perhaps the best possible to convey thoughts which were often like the spurting of volcanic fire; but it was inharmonious, rough-hewn, and savage."

A book written from such a point of view had no "public" prepared for it. When it appeared partisans on both sides were offended; and to the reading multitude who wish merely to be amused without the trouble of thinking, it had no attraction till they learned its merits from others. But to the chosen few, to those who had eyes of their own to see with, and manliness enough to recognise when a living man was speaking to them, to those who had real intellect, and could therefore acknowledge intellect, and welcome it, whether they agreed or not with the writer's opinions, the high quality of the *French Revolution* became apparent instantly, and Carlyle was at once looked up to, by some who themselves were looked up to by the world, as a man of extraordinary gifts; perhaps as the highest among them all. Dickens carried a copy of it with him wherever he went. Southey read it six times over. Thackeray reviewed it enthusiastically. Even Jeffrey generously admitted that Carlyle had succeeded upon lines on which he had himself foretold inevitable failure. The orthodox political philosophers, Macaulay, Hallam, Brougham, though they perceived that Carlyle's views were the condemnation of their own, though they felt instinctively that he was their most dangerous enemy, yet could not any longer despise him. They with the rest were obliged to admit that there had arisen a new star, of baleful perhaps and ominous aspect, but a star of the first magnitude in English literature.

Carlyle's *French Revolution* has been, of course, debated and criticised from every point of view. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, after describing Carlyle as one of the finest story-tellers in the world, sums up an opinion of the *French Revolution* in these words:

It never occurred to him sufficiently clearly to ask what place Shelley occupied in Shelley's Cosmos, or Robespierre in Robespierre's Cosmos. Not feeling the need of this, he never studied, he never really listened to Shelley's philosophy or Robespierre's philosophy. Here, after a

somewhat long circuit, we have arrived at the one serious deficiency in Carlyle's histories, a neglect to realise the importance of theory and of alternative theories in human affairs. . . .

So far as it goes, this is perfectly true of the French Revolution; but only so far as it goes. The French Revolution was a sudden starting from slumber of that terrible spirit of man which sleeps through the greater number of centuries; and Carlyle appreciates this, and describes it more powerfully and fearfully than any human historian, because this idea of the spirit of man breaking through formulæ and building again on fundamentals was a part of his own philosophical theory, and therefore he understood it. But he never, as I have said, took any real trouble to understand other people's philosophical theories. And he did not realise the other fact about the French Revolution —the fact that it was not merely an elemental outbreak, but was also a great doctrinal movement. It is an astonishing thing that Carlyle's *French Revolution* contrives to be as admirable and as accurate a history as it is, while from one end to the other there is hardly a suggestion that he comprehended the moral and political theories which were the guiding stars of the French Revolutionists. It was not necessary that he should agree with them, but it was necessary that he should be interested in them; nay, in order that he should write a perfect history of their developments, it was necessary that he should admire them. The truly impartial historian is not he who is enthusiastic for neither side in a historic struggle.

"Sartor Resartus"

Sartor Resartus is in some respects the most Teutonic of all Carlyle's writing. Under the form of a dissertation on Clothes by a learned and eccentric German professor, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle hews and hammers out his gospel of work, endurance, and contempt for what men call happiness as distinct from the "blessedness" which is the reward of truth-seeking and duty done. The style is a dialect which only Carlyle could have

invented and which no writer can safely imitate; it is purely his own, and it has been truly said that in no other could he have delivered his message. The book contains passages of sombre splendour that are almost unrivalled in modern prose. Such a one is the magnificent description of Night, in the third chapter, which follows:

> *"Ach, mein Lieber!"* he said once, at midnight, when we had returned from the Coffee-house in rather earnest talk, "it is a true sublimity to dwell here. These fringes of lamplight, struggling up through smoke and thousandfold exhalation, some fathoms into the ancient reign of Night, what thinks Boötes of them, as he leads his Hunting-Dogs over the Zenith in their leash of sidereal fire? That stifled hum of Midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest; and the chariot-wheels of Vanity, still rolling here and there through distant streets, are bearing her to Halls roofed-in, and lighted to the due pitch for her; and only Vice and Misery, to prowl or to moan like night-birds, are abroad: that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven! Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid! The joyful and the sorrowful are there; men are dying there, men are being born; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing; and around them all is the vast, void Night. The proud Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within damask curtains; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw: in obscure cellars, *Rouge-et-Noir* languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard hungry Villains; while Councillors of State sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are Men. The Lover whispers his mistress that the coach is ready; and she, full of hope and fear, glides down, to fly with him over the borders: the Thief, still more silently, sets-to his picklocks and crowbars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen first snore in their boxes. Gay mansions, with supper-rooms

and dancing-rooms, are full of light and music and high-swelling hearts; but, in the Condemned Cells, the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint, and bloodshot eyes look out through the darkness, which is around and within, for the light of a stern last morning. Six men are to be hanged on the morrow: comes no hammering from the *Rabenstein?*—their gallows must even now be o' building. Upwards of five-hundred-thousand two-legged animals without feathers lie round us, in horizontal positions; their heads all in night-caps and full of the foolishest dreams. Riot cries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame; and the Mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten. —All these heaped and huddled together with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them;—crammed in, like salted fish in their barrel;—or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others; *such* work goes on under that smoke-counterpane!—but I, *mein Werther*, sit above it all; I am alone with the Stars."

In *Past and Present* Carlyle writes of the seventeenth century—of which he gives us a wonderfully imaginative picture—much as William Morris wrote about the Middle Ages. To him it was the golden age. "It was the last glimpse of it in our world this of English Puritanism, very great, very glorious, tragical enough to all thinking hearts that look on it from these days of ours." His worship of the Puritan spirit, his belief that salvation can only come through a return to stern disciplined Puritanism, is finely expressed in the last passage of his *Cromwell's Letters:*

Oliver is gone; and with him England's Puritanism, laboriously built together by this man, and made a thing far-shining miraculous to its own Century, and memorable to all the Centuries, soon goes. Puritanism, without its King, is *kingless,* anarchic; falls into dislocation, self-col-

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THOMAS CARLYLE

From the painting by J. A. McNeill Whistler

lision; staggers, plunges into ever deep anarchy; King, Defender of the Puritan Faith there can now none be found; and nothing is left but to recall the old disowned Defender, with the remnants of his Four Surplices, and two Centuries of *Hypocrisia,* and put up with all that, the best we may. The Genius of England no longer soars Sunward, world-defiant, like an eagle through the storms, "mewing her mighty youth," as John Milton saw her do: the Genius of England, much like a greedy Ostrich intent on provender and a whole skin mainly, stands with its *other* extremity Sunward; with its Ostrich-head stuck into the readiest bush, of old Church-tippets, King-cloaks, or what other "sheltering Fallacy" there may be, and *so* awaits the issue. The issue has been slow; but it is now seen to have been inevitable. No ostrich, intent on gross terrene provender, and sticking its head into Fallacies, but will be awakened one day,—in a terrible *a-posteriori* manner, if not otherwise!—Awake before it come to that: gods and men bid us awake! The Voices of our Fathers, with thousandfold stern monition to one and all, bid us awake.

Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* is a most remarkable book. It is written with extreme wit. In the character of Frederick, and still more in that of his father, Carlyle portrays his ideal strong man, his ideal rules—the sort of tyrant, however benevolent, that is now out of fashion. But the book is splendid to a degree not sufficiently realised by readers today.

Carlyle had a poor opinion, Froude tells us, of Science—"*Facts* of all kinds were sacred to him"; love of Truth and love of Righteousness were his passion. Yet with his evangelical training and his deep-rooted conviction of the truth of the fundaments of Victorian faith he watched with almost dismay the controversy that centred round the "Darwin theories" of the transmutation of species. "He fought against it," says Froude, "though I could see he dreaded that it might turn out true."

Indeed, Carlyle was impatient. He lost his orthodox faith, but he had no sympathy with heretics or with liberal theologians.

"There goes Stanley," he said one day, Froude relates, as he passed the Dean in the park, "boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England."

Carlyle's gospel, and, not less, his manner of uttering it, have always affected different minds differently. His law, it has been justly said, was ever that of Sinai, not of the Mount of Beatitudes. "In his Bible there was no New Testament." He has been compared, indeed, to "a Calvinist who had lost his creed." Kingsley compares him to an old Hebrew prophet who goes to prince and beggar, saying, "If you do not do this or that you will go to Hell, not the hell the priests talk of—but a hell on this earth." Ruskin was deeply influenced by Carlyle and acknowledged that his strong thinking had deeply coloured his own, but he could summarise his prophetic character only by saying that "he lived in the clouds and was struck by lightning." In Carlylism the late Lord Morley saw Byronism turned more masculine: "it is Byronism with thew and sinew, bass pipe and shaggy bosom."

§ 3

Thomas Babington Macaulay

Macaulay is the most popular of all English historians, and he owes his popularity to the clearness of his style and the conviction with which, as his critics might suggest, he twists fact to prove the justness of his opinions.

Macaulay was born in 1800. He was brought up in a rigid Evangelical household, being the son of Zachary Macaulay, so justly remembered for his efforts to free the slaves. After a period of study at various private schools, young Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge. He was no mathematician, but in classics he won the highest distinction, and duly became a Fellow of his college. He was called to the Bar, but never seriously sought to practise, preferring a life devoted to literature and politics. His career was simply a series of triumphs.

At the age of twenty-five, he began his lifelong connection with the *Edinburgh Review,* with his essay on Milton. In 1830 he entered Parliament, where he immediately won fame by his orations in support of the Reform Bill. As a reward for his political services he was appointed Judicial Member of the Indian Supreme Council, and from 1834 until 1838 he resided in India. On his return he re-entered Parliament, and held two Cabinet offices in succession. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage. He died in 1859.

It is humanly impossible for any man to write history impartially. The presentation of facts must be coloured by the opinions of the writer. And it is Macaulay's virtue that he never pretends to be anything but a partisan. He was a Whig. To him the revolution that cost James II his crown and made Dutch William King of England was the most beneficent event in our history, and his *History of England,* which begins with the accession of James II and was never finished, is one long belauding of the political principles of the historian. Macaulay's honesty is obvious. He has no use for half tones, for casuistry, or for speculation. To him the good was very, very good and the naughty was horrid. So vigorous a partisan is an unreliable guide but an inspiring companion, and there is no question that his *History* is pre-eminently and sometimes excitingly readable. The incidental reflections are often sage and suggestive. The following passage is typical. In reading it one should remember that Macaulay had experience of a dominant race in India.

> The member of a dominant race is, in his dealings with the subject race, seldom indeed fraudulent,—for fraud is the resource of the weak,—but imperious, insolent, and cruel. Towards his brethren, on the other hand, his conduct is generally just, kind, and even noble. His self-respect leads him to respect all who belong to his own order. His interest impels him to cultivate a good understanding with those whose prompt, strenuous, and courageous assistance may at any moment be necessary to preserve his pro-

perty and life. It is a truth ever present to his mind that his own wellbeing depends on the ascendency of the class to which he belongs. His very selfishness therefore is sublimed into public spirit: and this public spirit is stimulated to fierce enthusiasm by sympathy, by the desire of applause, and by the dread of infamy. For the only opinion which he values is the opinion of his fellows; and in their opinion devotion to the common cause is the most sacred of duties. The character, thus formed, has two aspects. Seen on one side, it must be regarded by every well-constituted mind with disapprobation. Seen on the other, it irresistibly extorts applause. The Spartan, smiting and spurning the wretched Helot, moves our disgust. But the same Spartan, calmly dressing his hair, and uttering his concise jests, on what he well knows to be his last day, in the pass of Thermopylæ, is not to be contemplated without admiration. To a superficial observer it may seem strange that so much evil and so much good should be found together. But in truth the good and the evil, which at first sight appear almost incompatible, are closely connected, and have a common origin. It was because the Spartan had been taught to revere himself as one of a race of sovereigns, and to look down on all that was not Spartan as of an inferior species, that he had no fellow-feeling for the miserable serfs who crouched before him, and that the thought of submitting to a foreign master, or of turning his back before an enemy, never, even in the last extremity, crossed his mind.

The Essays

As an essayist Macaulay is supremely great, and in England the *Essays* are among the half-dozen books in the English language that are most widely read. Their range is very wide, the topics dealt with being literary, biographical, and historical. As a literary critic he falls far below such men as Coleridge, De Quincey, and Matthew Arnold. He could infallibly discriminate between good poetry or good prose, and bad; and his judgments, always oracularly delivered, are generally sound. But when he comes to give reasons for those judgments he is lament-

ably inadequate. Of his own prose style it may safely be asserted that nothing more brilliant has ever been produced. No one has surpassed him in the art of telling a story;—the criterion surely by which all historical compositions must be judged! He is as clear as crystal, the short sentences, of which the well-constructed paragraphs are composed, pressing forward with cumulative strength to the inevitable conclusion. He is a supreme master of rhetoric, with a great love for gorgeous pomp, and an unerring eye for dramatic effect. There is abundant wit and sarcasm; but little irony, and perhaps nothing entitled to be termed sublime. No writer has ever indulged in such wealth of illustration and allusion. The whole of literature and the whole of history, from Pericles and Plato down to Guizot and Scott, are ransacked to furnish these; and they are drawn indifferently from the sublimest treatises and the flimsiest plays.

His famous essay on Milton was published in the *Edinburgh Review* when he was twenty-five, and all his other essays appeared in the same periodical. The *Milton* is positive as a young man's writing should be, learned, effective, and histrionic, as when towards the end of the essay he writes:

> We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

That of course is oratory, and not too sincere oratory at that.

The essays have been divided into essays on English history, essays on foreign history, political essays, and literary essays. In them all, there is the quality which in a lesser man would

be called cocksureness, joined to a love of hard hitting for its own sake. Thus, in the essay on Warren Hastings he describes one John Williams as "that malignant and filthy baboon," and wasting his critical talent on the pitiful poet Robert Montgomery he says:

> We have no enmity to Mr. Robert Montgomery. We know nothing whatever about him, except what we have learned from his books, and from the portrait prefixed to one of them, in which he appears to be doing his very best to look like a man of genius and sensibility, though with less success than his strenuous exertions deserve. We select him, because his works have received more enthusiastic praise, and have deserved more unmixed contempt, than any which, as far as our knowledge extends, have appeared within the last three or four years. His writing bears the same relation to poetry that a Turkey carpet bears to a picture.

In his literary essays Macaulay is at his best in the fine eulogy of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* in which occurs the well-known passage:

> That wonderful book, while it obtains admiration from the most fastidious critics, is loved by those who are too simple to admire it. Dr. Johnson, all whose studies were desultory, and who hated, as he said, to read books through, made an exception in favour of the *Pilgrim's Progress.* That work was one of the two or three works which he wished longer. It was by no common merit that the illiterate secretary extracted praise like this from the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories. In the wildest parts of Scotland the *Pilgrim's Progress* is the delight of the peasantry. In every nursery the *Pilgrim's Progress* is a greater favourite than *Jack the Giant-killer.* Every reader knows the straight and narrow path as well as he knows a road in which he has gone backward and forward a hundred times. This is the highest miracle of genius that

things which are not should be as though they were, that the imagination of one mind should become the personal recollection of another. And this miracle the tinker has wrought.

The same realisation of the intimate connection between great literature and life is expressed in the essay on Moore's *Life of Byron*, in which he says:

> Since the first great masterpieces [of poetry] were produced, everything that is changeable in this world has been changed. Civilisation has been gained, lost, gained again. Religions, and languages, and forms of government, and usages of private life, and modes of thinking, all have undergone a succession of revolutions. Everything has passed away but the great features of nature, and the heart of man, and the miracles of that art of which it is the office to reflect back the heart of man and the features of nature. Those two strange old poems, the wonder of ninety generations, still retain all their freshness. They still command the veneration of minds enriched by the literature of many nations and ages. They are still, even in wretched translations, the delight of schoolboys. Having survived ten thousand capricious fashions, having seen successive codes of criticism become obsolete, they still remain to us, immortal with the immortality of truth, the same when perused in the study of an English scholar, as when they were first chanted at the banquets of the Ionian princes.

Matthew Arnold, to whom Macaulay with his insistent common sense was the embodiment of Philistinism, sneered at his poetry, but Professor Saintsbury has justly said that Macaulay's poetry is "poetry for the million . . . but not the less poetry; and those who do not recognise the poetic quality in it show that their poetical thermometer is deficient in delicacy and range." *The Lays of Ancient Rome* have probably had more readers than any other English book of verse. "And even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer" has become

a journalistic cliché, and for two generations public meetings have been stirred to the soul by

Then no one was for a party;
  Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
  And the poor man loved the great:
Then lands were fairly portioned;
  Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
  In the brave days of old.

Doubtless it is all very obvious, but Macaulay never pretended to be subtle. He wrote ballads for the people, and the popular ballad has rarely in modern times had greater force and beauty than in the last two stanzas of Horatius.

When the oldest cask is opened,
  And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
  And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
  Around the firebrands close;
When the girls are weaving baskets,
  And the lads are shaping bows;

When the goodman mends his armour
  And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
  Goes flashing through the loom;
With weeping and with laughter
  Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
  In the brave days of old.

§ 4

James Anthony Froude

James Anthony Froude was born in 1818, and died in 1894. Like Gibbon, he was educated at Westminster, whence

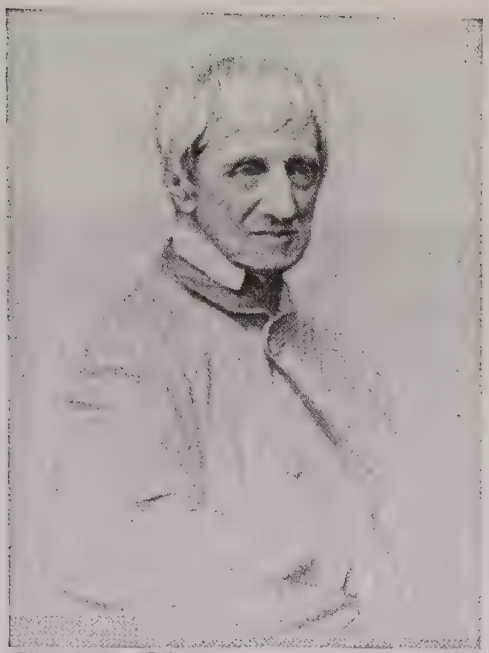


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JOHN H. NEWMAN

The leader of the Oxford Movement, a cardinal of the Roman Church, distinguished poet and master of prose.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

CAPTURE OF THE BASTILLE

After H. Singleton.

On the night of the 12th July, 1789, the grim prison of the Bastille was besieged by the people of Paris, and, as Carlyle says in his great work, *The French Revolution:* "To describe this siege, perhaps transcends the talent of mortals. After four hours of world-Bedlam it surrenders. The Bastille is down."

By permission of Messrs. Williams & Norgate from their edition of "The Lays of Ancient Rome."

HORATIUS AND ASTUR

From the Colour Illustration by Norman Ault

'the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.

Lord Macaulay's *Horatius.*

he proceeded to Oriel College, Oxford. It was the period of Newman's ascendancy, and Froude succumbed to the spell of the great teacher. Indeed, his first literary enterprise was a *Life of St. Neot,* for Newman's series of "Lives of the British Saints." However, he soon broke with the Tractarians; and during the rest of his life took a large and active part in the war against orthodoxy, particularly in the form of Anglo-Catholicism. His religious views are given in his autobiography, *The Nemesis of Faith,* 1849. The middle years of his career were devoted to study and writing, first at Nant Gwynant in North Wales and afterwards at Bideford. He travelled extensively in the Colonies; edited *Fraser's Magazine;* and, in the last years of his life, held the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford. The great fact of Froude's life was his friendship with Carlyle, whom he regarded with the veneration which the disciple feels for the inspired prophet. He became Carlyle's sole literary executor, and the best of his biographers, though he did his master an ill service in his revelations of his private life.

Froude's writings are both voluminous and varied. The most ambitious is the *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada,* a work which occupies twelve volumes. Although it begins in the middle of a reign and ends in the middle of another, it nevertheless possesses a real unity; for it purports to relate the history of the struggle between King and Pope in this country, with the ultimate victory of the former.

Froude was an ardent partisan; and his incomparable gift of eloquence was used to the full to vindicate Henry VIII and the Protestant leaders, and to vilify the Catholics. Of Froude's marvellous literary ability there never was any question. As a story-teller he rivals Macaulay. His knowledge of stage effect is perfect. The pictures he paints are superb in their vividness. His prose is natural and pure, and at the same time has abundant colour. In his writings there undoubtedly are passages which

earn for him a place with the supreme masters of English prose, above Gibbon, or Macaulay, or Carlyle.

It is extremely difficult to do any sort of justice to Froude by short quotations, for his strength lies in continuous narrative. The following passage will, however, give the reader some idea of the beauty of his prose, and the dramatic qualities which make all his writings such fascinating reading.

> No more notable spectacle had been witnessed in this planet for many a century—not, perhaps, since a greater than Luther stood before the Roman Procurator. There on the raised dais sat the sovereign of half the world. There on either side of him stood the archbishops, the ministers of state, the princes of the empire, gathered together to hear and judge the son of a poor miner, who had made the world ring with his name. The body of the hall was thronged with knights and nobles—stern hard men in dull gleaming armour. Luther, in his brown frock, was led forward between their ranks. The looks which greeted him were not all unfriendly. The first article of a German credo was belief in *courage*. Germany had had its feuds in times past with Popes of Rome, and they were not without pride that a poor countryman of theirs should have taken by the beard the great Italian priest. They had settled among themselves that, come what would, there should be fair play; and they looked on half admiring, and half in scorn. As Luther passed up the hall, a steel lance touched him on the shoulder with his gauntlet. "Pluck up thy spirit, little monk," he said, "some of us here have seen warm work in our time, but, by my troth, nor I nor any knight in this company ever needed a stout heart more than thou needest it now. If thou hast faith in these doctrines of thine, little monk, go on, in the name of God." "Yes, in the name of God," said Luther, throwing back his head, "in the name of God, forward!"

The other notable Victorian historians include Henry Hallam, author of the *Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II*, a not too

reliable Whig; Edward Freeman, author of the *History of the Norman Conquest,* an enormously long book written by a careful and unimaginative scholar; Samuel Rawson Gardiner, whose impartiality perilously approaches dullness; John Richard Green, whose *Short History of the English People* remains the most reliable summary of this country's story; and Alexander Kinglake, the brilliant author of the *History of the War in the Crimea.*

§ 5

John Henry Newman

An "Outline of Literature" has obviously only a secondary concern with the mass of philosophic, religious, and scientific writing produced in the Victorian era. Just, however, as Ruskin and Carlyle were both philosophers and writers of genius, so John Henry Newman was both a religious teacher and controversialist and a supreme literary artist. From school he went to Trinity College, Oxford. In 1828 he became the incumbent of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, and it was during his fifteen years at St. Mary's that the Tractarian Movement was launched and the famous Tracts for the Times, written by Newman, Pusey, and Hurrell Froude, were published. Newman, himself, was the author of Tract XC, which declares that the Church of England is Catholic and not Protestant. Two years after the publication of this tract, Newman joined the Church of Rome, and to quote Disraeli, Anglicanism "reeled under the shock." He died in 1890. The greater part of his later life was spent at the Birmingham Oratory, his time being filled with writing and often with bitter religious controversies which must have been antipathetic to his shy, sensitive nature. He was created a cardinal in 1879.

Newman's writings included poems, sermons, historical and theological essays, and polemical treatises. His best-known prose works are the *Idea of a University,* 1852, the *Grammar of*

Assent, 1870, and the much more important *Apologia pro Vita Sua,* his spiritual biography, written in reply to Charles Kingsley's violent attack on him in 1864. His prose is splendidly lucid and vigorous, attractive to readers who have no kind of sympathy with the writer's opinions. The following passage from the *Apologia* is an example of Newman's wonderful mastery of words:

> To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, "having no hope and without God in the world,"—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

As a poet, Newman is best known and loved for the hymn *Lead, kindly Light,* which he wrote in 1833 while journeying home from Sicily. He published four volumes of verse. R. H. Hutton declared that his early poems are "unequalled for grandeur of outline, purity of taste, and radiance of total effort"; but it is in *The Dream of Gerontius,* written when he was a man of sixty-five, that his poetic genius finds its perfect expression. *The Dream of Gerontius* is Newman's own dream of the passing

Photo: Rischgitz Collection

LORD MACAULAY

The famous Historian and Essayist.

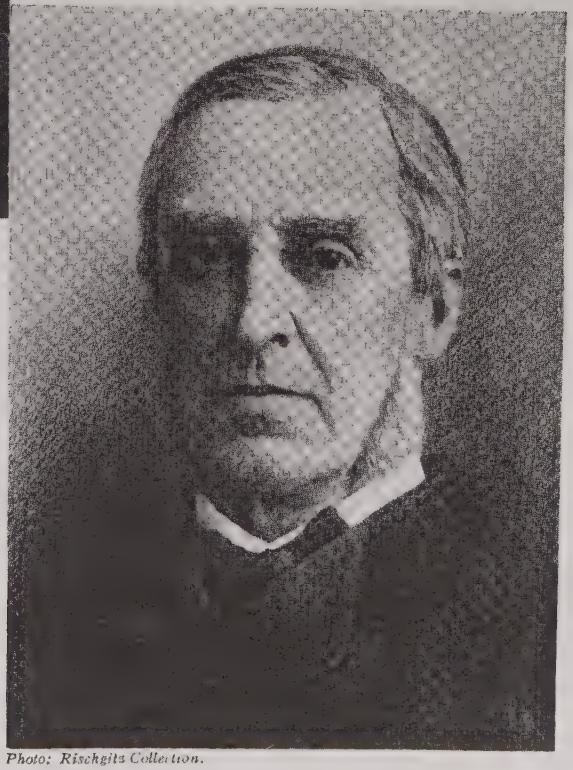
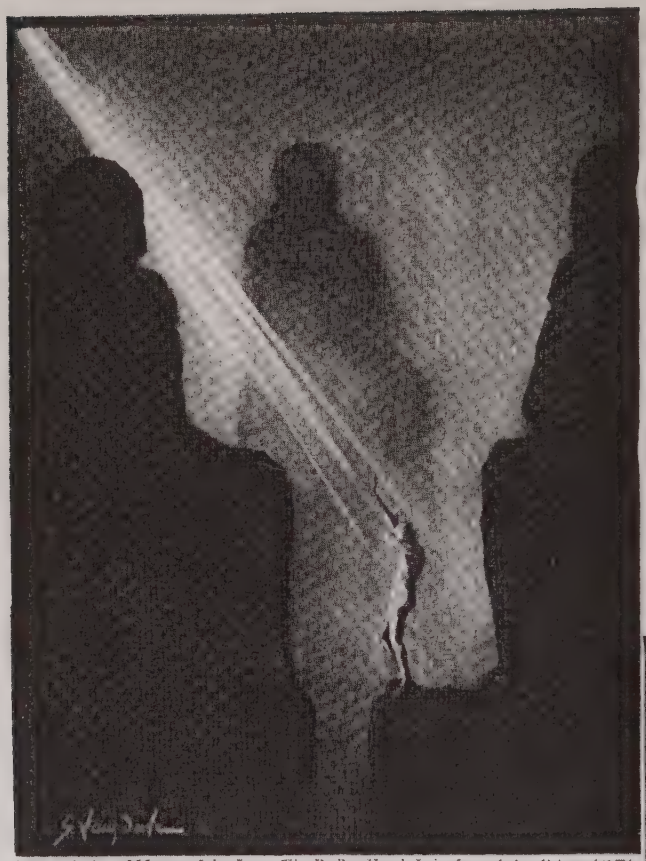


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

Drawn in coloured chalks by J. Edward Goodall.
National Portrait Gallery, London.

The historian and the friend and biographer of Carlyle.



By permission of Messrs. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Ltd., from their edition of "The Dream of Gerontius"

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

From the illustration by Stella Langdale

ANGEL: "... then sight of that which to the soul is sight
As by a lightning flash will come to thee ..."

JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE AT THE AGE OF 25

From the Miniature by Kenneth Macleay

The wife of the "Sage of Chelsea," whose matrimonial troubles have been told to the world by Froude

of a soul from this world to Purgatory. He thought so little of the poem himself, that he put it away in a pigeon-hole and forgot all about it, and it was by an accident that it was first published in the Roman Catholic magazine, the *Month*. Though far shorter and slighter, *The Dream of Gerontius* has been compared to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Dr. Alexander Whyte has said: "*The Dream of Gerontius* was the true copestone for Newman to cut and to lay on the literary and religious work of his whole life. Had Dante himself composed *The Dream of Gerontius* as his elegy on the death of some beloved friend, it would have been universally received as altogether worthy of his superb genius, and it would have been a jewel altogether worthy of his peerless crown. There is nothing of its kind outside of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* at all equal to the *Gerontius* for solemnising, ennobling, and sanctifying power. It is a poem that every man should have by heart who has it before him to die."

The Dream of Gerontius contains the famous hymn *Praise to the Holiest in the Height,* and perhaps the noblest lines in the poem are those in which an angel explains his condition to the dead Gerontius:

> A disembodied soul, thou hast by right
> No converse with aught else beside thyself;
> But, lest so stern a solitude should load
> And break thy being, in mercy are vouchsafed
> Some lower measures of perception,
> Which seem to thee, as though through channels brought,
> Through ear, or nerves, or palate, which are gone.
> And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams,
> Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical;
> For the belongings of thy present state,
> Save through such symbols, come not home to thee.

"And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams" is magnificent in its pensive beauty.

The poem concludes with the angel's promise to the soul, left for a little while in Purgatory:

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
And I will come and awake thee on the morrow.

§ 6

George Borrow

George Borrow, one of the most individual writers of the Victorian era, was born in 1803. At the age of twenty-nine George Borrow had already given proof of two dominant characteristics —his passion for wandering and his gift of strange tongues. The son of a sergeant-major in the West Norfolk Militia, his childhood was spent following his father's regiment as it moved up and down the kingdom collecting recruits to fight Napoleon.

The West Norfolks were disbanded after the war, and Captain Borrow, as he had now become, settled with a modest pension at Norwich. Here George attended the Grammar School for three years, and then served as articled clerk to a firm of local solicitors. Law, however, had no charm for him compared with the fascination of languages. Though never an accurate philological scholar, he possessed marvellous powers of picking up any foreign speech.

At Norwich he contrived to learn Welsh on Sundays from a Welsh groom, he talked Romany with friendly gipsies, he studied Danish in the Guildhall Library, he had lessons in Hebrew from a Jew, and in Spanish and Italian from a French *émigré,* and he read German with William Taylor, a clever but dissolute man of letters in the cathedral city.

After his father's death, in 1824, Borrow betook himself to London, and tried to earn a living by literary hack-work. We

get glimpses of him rambling in company with gipsies, or travelling about England with a tinker's cart, or roving along the road in France and Spain. But Borrow was back at Norwich with his widowed mother in 1832, when a clergyman who knew his rare gift for mastering languages introduced him as a linguist to the officials of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The problem at this time was to produce the Manchu New Testament. The Committee of the Society promptly set Borrow to study this Tartar tongue. So impressed were they by his capacity that six months later they dispatched him to St. Petersburg, where there was a damaged set of type of St. Matthew's Gospel. He went armed with introductions, through which he obtained countenance from the Russian authorities. He rescued and cleansed the type. He conquered endless difficulties with printers, and himself superintended the press-work. He learned enough Manchu to transcribe and correct the translation and read the proofs. By dint of his energy and toil and business tact, one thousand copies of the New Testament were bound and delivered in August, 1835.

On his return to London the Society decided to send its successful young agent to the Peninsula, and in November, 1835, he landed at Lisbon. He found Portugal "gasping and dazed" after years of civil conflict. In the first week of 1836 he crossed the frontier into Spain, where a furious civil war was still going on. His next four or five years were spent in riding up and down that romantic country, distributing Spanish Bibles and Testaments, and incidentally enjoying a long series of adventures by no means free from personal peril.

As his manner was, he made friends with all sorts and conditions of men—Carlists, smugglers, priests, peasants, Jews, ambassadors, and vagabonds. He conversed frankly with the Prime Minister of Spain and the Archbishop of Toledo. He saw the inside of more than one Spanish prison. At Madrid he opened a Bible shop, and contrived to publish editions of the

Spanish New Testament, a Gospel in Basque, and St. Luke translated by himself into Gitano for Spanish gipsies. He wrote home to the officials of the Bible Society long reports of these experiences set out in his own vivid, graphic style. Certainly no society ever possessed a more astonishing correspondent.

Literary Works

In April, 1840, Borrow finally left Spain and returned to London. The week after his arrival he bade farewell to the Society, and married a widow lady who possessed a grown-up daughter, a small estate, and a house at Oulton, near Lowestoft. There he settled down and spent most of the second half of his life. In 1841 he published *The Zincali,* an account of the gipsies in Spain, which he spoke of as "this strange wandering book of mine." At Oulton he also conceived the fortunate idea of utilising his letters and reports and personal journals and producing a volume "containing all my queer adventures in that queer country while engaged in distributing the Gospel." His friend Richard Ford, who acted as a sort of godfather to *The Bible in Spain,* described it as "a rum, very rum mixture," and compared it to *Gil Blas* blended with John Bunyan.

The work was published in three volumes by Mr. Murray at the end of 1842, and achieved immediate and immense success. It gave Borrow his first and greatest vogue. Here was a traveller, full of courage and gusto, who could ride and box and talk strange dialects—a robust writer in love with his fellow-men, who saw them all dramatically and pictured them in bold, sinewy English—a missionary who somehow contrived to convey the impression that St. Paul's adventures and voyages were relatively humdrum compared with his own.

The Bible in Spain was followed by the famous *Lavengro,* published in 1851, and *Romany Rye,* published in 1857. *Lavengro* is perhaps the most fascinating open-air book in the English language. Who that reads it can fail to pay homage to Isopel

Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

"SIR ISUMBRAS AT THE FORD," BY SIR J. E. MILLAIS, BART., P.R.A.

Ruskin in his life did more remarkable things and said more that was noteworthy than is given to most men to accomplish in a lifetime. Of these, few became the great critic better than his championship of the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, of which the above is a notable example.

The Pre-Raphaelites owed much, and posterity more, to Ruskin for his kindly help of that little group of enthusiasts: help freely accorded when he came fully to realise what they were striving to achieve.

Ruskin held Millais up as the shining light of the Pre-Raphaelites, but that he dealt very faithfully with his work at times is evidenced by his criticism of "Sir Isumbras," of which he wrote, "This is not a fiasco, but a catastrophe

Berners? And the fight of the Flaming Tin-man is perhaps the most famous and thrilling fisticuffs bout in fiction.

Someone has spoken of Borrow as "the prose Morland of a vanished roadside." Yet he interests us most of all when he is writing his own life, generally under some mystifying disguise. That life, indeed, had its shadows. He suffered from constant melancholia and depression. Too often he quarrelled with friends, and made not a few enemies. In his old age he grew disappointed and morose, and spent many dismal solitary hours. In the end he died alone. George Borrow never seemed so like the happy warrior as when he galloped his black Andalusian stallion over rocky tracks in the Peninsula, wearing (as he says) in his hat the colours of the Bible Society.

§ 7

Scientists and Philosophers

It is outside the scope of this OUTLINE to consider the writings of scientists and philosophers at any length. Charles Darwin stands pre-eminent among the Victorian scientists. The nineteenth century, indeed, has been called "Darwin's century." He was born in 1809, and after leaving Cambridge he sailed on H.M.S. *Beagle* to make a survey of the South American coast. The result of this journey was his first book, *A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World*, published in 1839. Darwin was a man of means, and on his return from South America he settled down in Kent and devoted his life to scientific investigation. His theories concerning the evolution of the human race are set out in his famous book *The Origin of Species*.

Darwin's best-known disciple was Thomas Henry Huxley, who was born in 1825 and, by common consent, one of the three or four most accomplished of English scientists. Huxley's *Handbook of Biology* is written in a manner that makes it readable for the unscientific reader. He was a man of science, but he was also a man of letters, with an all-round interest in life.

Some of his best writing is to be found in his *Lay Sermons,* of which the following is an extract. The passage is taken from an essay on *The Origin of Species,* written in 1860. It is, of course, characterised by the cocksureness of the Victorian scientist. But the force and humour of the writing must be evident even to those who disagree with Huxley's opinion.

> In this nineteenth century, as at the dawn of modern physical science, the cosmogony of the semi-barbarous Hebrew is the incubus of the philosopher and the opprobrium of the orthodox. Who shall number the patient and earnest seekers after truth, from the days of Galileo until now, whose lives have been embittered and their good name blasted by the mistaken zeal of Bibliolaters? Who shall count the host of weaker men whose sense of truth has been destroyed in the effort to harmonise impossibilities—whose life has been wasted in the attempt to force the generous new wine of Science into the old bottles of Judaism, compelled by the outcry of the same strong party?
>
> It is true that if philosophers have suffered, their cause has been amply avenged. Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules; and history records that whenever science and orthodoxy have been fairly opposed, the latter has been forced to retire from the lists, bleeding and crushed, if not annihilated; scotched, if not slain. But orthodoxy is the Bourbon of the world of thought. It learns not, neither can it forget; and though, at present, bewildered and afraid to move, it is as willing as ever to insist that the first chapter of Genesis contains the beginning and the end of sound science; and to visit, with such petty thunderbolts as its half-paralysed hands can hurl, those who refuse to degrade Nature to the level of primitive Judaism.
>
> Philosophers, on the other hand, have no such aggressive tendencies. With eyes fixed on the noble goal to which *per aspera et ardua* they tend, they may, now and then, be stirred to momentary wrath by the unnecessary obstacles with which the ignorant, or the malicious, encumber, if they

cannot bar, the difficult path; but why should their souls be deeply vexed? The majesty of Fact is on their side, and the elemental forces of Nature are working for them. Not a star comes to the meridian at its calculated time but testifies to the justice of their methods—their beliefs are "one with the falling ruin and with the growing corn." By doubt they are established, and open inquiry is their bosom friend. Such men have no fear of traditions, however venerable, and no respect for them when they become mischievous and obstructive; but they have better than mere antiquarian business in hand, and if dogmas, which ought to be fossil but are not, are not forced upon their notice, they are too happy to treat them as non-existent.

Herbert Spencer, best known of the Victorian philosophers, sought to reconcile psychology and ethics with the discoveries of Darwin and his contemporaries. He was a voluminous writer, but it is sufficient here to say of him that he carried on the great tradition of English philosophic writing which began with Bacon and was continued by Hobbes, Locke, and Berkeley.

It is impossible, too, to make more than a passing reference to John Stuart Mill, a prodigy who could read Greek and Latin when he was eight, who, following in the tradition of Adam Smith, became the foremost economist of his age.

§ 8

John Ruskin

Ruskin was a poet.

That is the essential thing to understand about him. What he took himself to be, a thinker, a teacher, a prophet, born, by a cursed spite, to set the world right—this aspect of himself was pure illusion. His opinions upon every subject under heaven, his ideas concerning life and art, were merely the caprices which happened, at the time of writing, to be floating through his brain, and were mostly destined to be damned thereafter, by himself, in words of angry fire. None the less, he looked upon himself,

quite sincerely, as an Olympian, secure from mortal error. "I know," he says in one of his letters, "that I am at one with the wisest men of all ages." As for common men and common things:

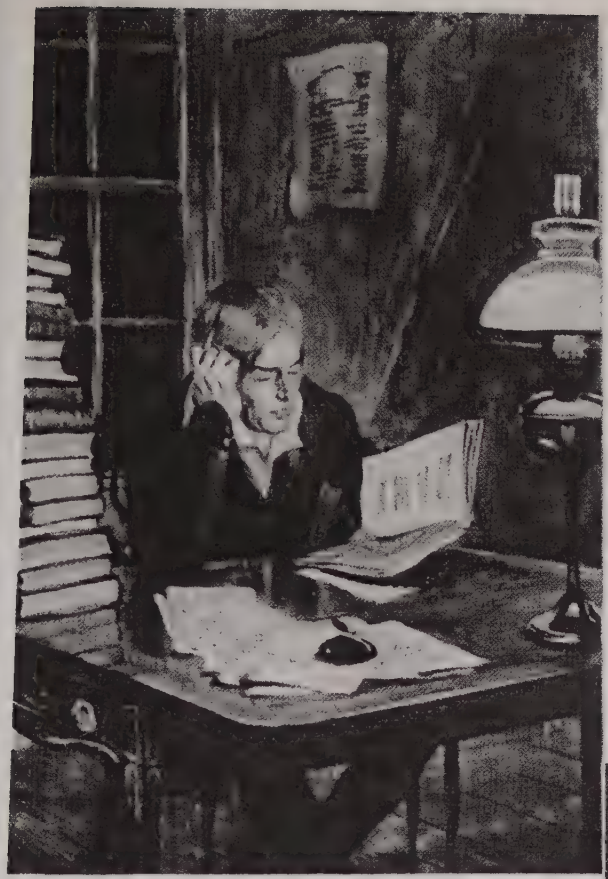
> The English Constitution is the rottenest mixture of Simony, bribery, sneaking tyranny, shameless cowardice, and accomplished lying, that ever the Devil chewed small to spit into God's Paradise.

With the same Olympian confidence he posed as an authority on music, on which subject he put forth some strange gems of criticism. "Beethoven," he remarked, "always sounds to me like the upsetting of bags of nails, with here and there an also dropped hammer."

Ruskin as Art Critic

As an art critic, which he chiefly was, he held the view that painting is a language to convey *ideas,* that being the greatest painting wherein most ideas are conveyed. This, of course, is not the view of most of the great artists of the world, who set a value on technique quite apart from subject, and who regard a painter, not as a purveyor of ideas, but as a creator of things of beauty. If Ruskin disliked the subject of a picture, his "criticism" was satire; and as for his satire, no man could make a thing which he disliked look more ridiculous.

The foregoing extracts are of interest, not only for the light they throw on Ruskin's modes of thought, but because they are admirable examples of his wide diversities of style. The reader judging of him solely by his opinions is apt to throw away the book, disgusted. But this is taking a wrong point of view. Ruskin was a *poet.* And when, instead of laying down the law, he is writing as a poet pure and simple, he is one of the most delightful that the world has ever seen. Jupiter has turned into Apollo.



by permission of T. N. Foulis, from his edition of "Lavengro."

THE READING OF THE NEWGATE LIVES AND TRIALS

From the Colour Illustration by Edmund J. Sullivan.

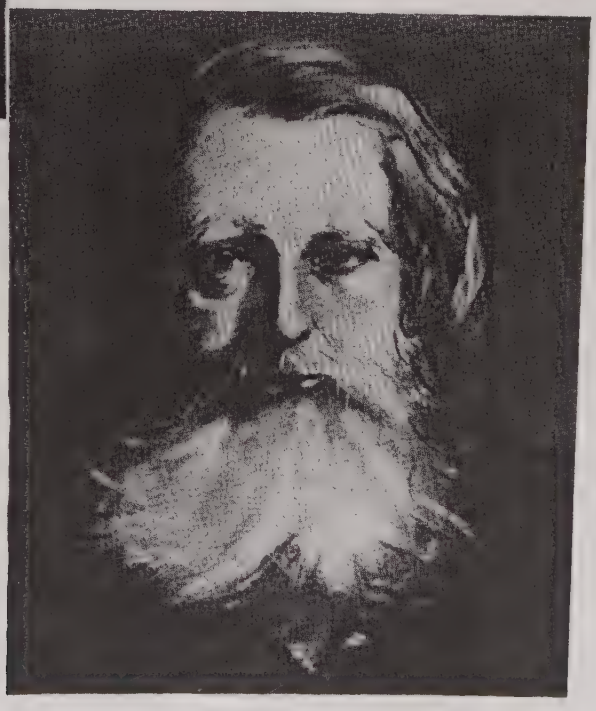
"As I read over the lives of these robbers and pickpockets, strange doubts began to arise in my mind about virtue and crime."—From *Lavengro*, by George Borrow.

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

HUXLEY

From the painting by the Hon. John Collier. National Portrait Gallery, London.

One of the greatest of Victorian scientists and philosophers.



JOHN RUSKIN

From the drawing by Joseph Simpson, R.B.A.

The great Victorian art critic and prose poet.

VIEW OF THE UPPER REACH OF THE GRAND CANAL, VENICE

From the drawing by John Ruskin

A delicate example of the work of the great critic.

SKIT ON "SIR ISUMBRAS" AND THE P.R.B., BY FREL SANDYS

This most interesting pictorial satire on 'Sir Isumbras at the Ford' is believed to be the work of Mr. F. Sandys, a distinguished brother artist of Millais. The dark and dignified steed of the original becomes a braying ass branded with the letters J. R. Oxon and on its back ride the Pre-Raphaelite brethren. Holman Hunt is represented as a quaint manmkin clinging to Millais, while Mr. Dante G. Rossetti rides on the front of the saddle. On the farther bank of the river are three figures representing Michael Angelo, Titian, and Raphael.

The print serves as a lasting reminder of the criticism heaped on this picture, and also of John Ruskin's championship of the Pre-Raphaelites.

It would be easy to extract from Ruskin's work a volume—an enchanting volume—of selections full of the glamour, the mystery, and the charm of poetry, full of the light that never was on sea or land—true poems, although the form of them is not the form of verse and rhyme, but of "that other harmony of prose." Take this, for example:

> There the priest is on the beach alone, the sun setting. He prays to it as it descends; flakes of its sheeted light are borne to him by the melancholy waves, and cast away with sighs upon the sand.

This is a prose-poem. It is a poem both in tone and cadence. Its words have something of the power usually found only in the finest verse. Like that, it steals upon the soul with music, dies off, and leaves it satisfied.

And what is this on Venice?

> ——a ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak, so quiet, so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City and which the Shadow.

Here is Ruskin's description of a picture, "April Love," by Arthur Hughes. It requires no comment. It has a magic beyond all words.

> Exquisite in every way; lovely in colour, most subtle in the quivering expression of the lips, and sweetness of the tender face, shaken, like a leaf by winds upon its dew and hesitating back into peace.

Much of Ruskin's special power is doubtless owing to his amazingly fine sense of colour. Indeed, in his eye for colour, he is the Keats of prose. Before his time, in prose description the grass indeed was green and the sky blue—but this was nearly all. It would be vain to seek through all the writings of his pre-

decessors for the slightest of such fragments as those that strew his pages; brief colour-sketches of "the flakes of scarlet cloud burning like watch-fires in the green sky of the horizon—the level twilight behind purple hills—or the scarlet arch of dawn over the dark, troublous-edged sea."

Masterpieces of Descriptive Prose

Nor is it only in painting straight from nature that this unrivalled faculty appears. The following is from a picture—Turner's "Slave Ship." Note how the colour burns and glows throughout it—"an intense and lurid splendour":

> It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath, after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the restless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and

low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

If, for our own part, we had to fix upon his finest passage, we should pause and waver between five or six; but in the end we should, we think, be forced to settle upon "Moss and Lichens":

Meek creatures! The first mercy of the earth, veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks. No words that I know of will say what mosses are. None are delicate enough, none perfect enough, none rich enough. How is one to tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green—the starred divisions of rubied bloom, fine-filmed, as if the Rock Spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass—the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace. They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make his nest, and the wearied child his pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and grey lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honoured of the earth-children. Unfading as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark eternal tapestries of the

> hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn-blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, starlike, on the stone; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.

Such is the work of Ruskin at his best and greatest—and it is by his best and greatest, and by that only, that a man must in the end be judged. It is work that will not die. Opinions, systems, fashions of critique, spring up and perish; for the seed of death is in them. But the words of the real poets live for ever. The Spirit of Beauty has filled them with the breath of life, and made them, like itself, immortal. And of such are these.

Born in the year 1819, Ruskin was the only child of a wealthy wine merchant of Denmark Hill. He was brought up at home, "with no other prospect than the brick walls over the way"; so that when he began to travel the beauties of nature came upon his mind with all the greater force, "with an indefinable thrill such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit." His passion for landscape, and for Turner as the painter of it, produced the first volume of his great work, *Modern Painters* (1843), which afterwards became expanded into five volumes, on nature, art, and morals. *Stones of Venice* (1849), on the whole his greatest book, was a most picturesque and careful study of the buildings and the art of Venice. For some years he continued to produce a series of smaller works, *The Ethics of the Dust, The Crown of Wild Olive, Sesame and Lilies, The Queen of the Air, Unto This Last,* and many others. The subjects dealt with in these books are of every kind—letters, economics, mythology, science, art—and all are treated according to the peculiar methods which have been indicated in this article.

often wild and weak in thought, but often also, both in feeling and expression, such as could come only from a poet's soul.

Ruskin died at Coniston in the year 1900.

The two Victorian writers most affected by Ruskin's cult of beauty and ideal of writing as "building up pictures for the eye" were John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater. Symonds was born in 1840 and died in 1893. Of his many books the *History of the Renaissance* is the most important. It is very long and very florid, but it is a valuable guide to an absorbingly interesting epoch.

Pater wrote a beautiful prose, delicate, full of music, unique in English literature. His most read work is *Marcus the Epicurean,* in which he describes the intellectual and spiritual journey, through various philosophies to Christianity, of a Roman of the time of Marcus Aurelius.

§ 9

Richard Jefferies

Richard Jefferies, the son of a small Wiltshire farmer, strikes an entirely new note in the literature of the countryside. Born in 1848, of a typical English yeoman stock, which for generations had lived and worked in an environment which, in essentials, had changed little for hundreds of years, he gave expression to the spirit, the thoughts, and the dreams common among such folk, though normally unvocalised and even unformulated. A good deal of his writing consists of the records of careful observations of country events, more or less in the manner of White's *Natural History;* but that which specially characterises him is a lyrical spirit and spiritual sense quite alien to the old Selborne clergyman.

Jefferies had three great difficulties to contend with, though whether in the total result they helped or hindered, it is hard to say. They were poverty, lack of education, and ill-health. He shared not only the external but the cultural environment of the

rustic. His life was a short one. Born in 1848, he was but thirty-nine years old when he died; yet during that time he produced a considerable body of writings, much of which has permanent value. His writing career began as that of an ordinary provincial reporter; and, at about the same time, he wrote some novels of less than no merit. He had little human experience, and less book-knowledge, to help him.

In 1878, Jefferies' first important volume, *The Gamekeeper at Home,* was published. Practical and realistic to a degree, this book had a considerable vogue, by reason of the accuracy and intimacy of its observation. Four other books of a somewhat similar type quickly followed—*Wild Life in a Southern County, Hodge and his Masters, Round about a Great Estate,* and *The Amateur Poacher.* These were all studies in realism, and their effects were produced by the presentation of a large collection of accurate and relevant details. In 1881, Jefferies had sufficiently mastered his art to venture on a new kind of book. In the form of a fable, entitled *Wood Magic,* the doings and adventures of animals are treated in the anthropomorphic manner of a boy. The result was one of the most charming fantasies in our literature. *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* followed in the succeeding year. These two books constitute the essential biography of Jefferies' boyhood. They are necessary documents for anyone who would understand his mind and spirit. The ideal peace he desired, though his temperament made it impossible, is shown in the talk of his animal characters. Here is the reed speaking in *Wood Magic:*

> There is no *why* at all. We have been listening to the brook, me and my family, for ever so many thousands of years; and, though the brook has been talking and singing all that time, I never heard him ask *why* about anything. And the great oak, where you went to sleep, has been there, goodness knows how long, nobody can tell how long, and every one of his leaves have all been talking, but not one of

them ever asked *why;* nor does the sun, nor the stars, which I see every night shining in the clear water down there; so that I am quite sure there is no *why* at all.

That was the peace for which Jefferies yearned, but he could never win it. The reason is shown on nearly every page of his greatest, and nearly his last, book, *The Story of my Heart.* This remarkable volume is Jefferies' real autobiography; the soul-story of that queer blend, a sensual mystic.

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XXXV

MODERN WRITERS, AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN

MODERN WRITERS, AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN WRITERS

By Henry James Forman

§ 1

Henry James

ONLY a few years ago, not more than five or six, when one spoke of contemporary American writers, the first two names that occurred were inevitably those of Henry James and William Dean Howells. Both were fine artists, both voluminous, and both imbued with certain great traditions of the novel and letters in general. James died in 1916 and Howells in 1920—virtually yesterday. Yet rarely have two great literary figures been eclipsed so immediately after their death by a new spirit, a new fecundity, a new and wholly different outlook upon life and literature.

The reasons for this are at least dimly comprehensible and discernible through the smoke of the sudden and abrupt revolution in American letters.

Henry James was by nature, temperament, and choice a cosmopolite rather than an American. A father, imbued with a love of travel and possessed of private means, had early helped to Europeanise the boy who could write later, "The whole perfect Parisianism I seemed to myself always to have possessed mentally—even if I had but just turned twelve."

Upon his return to America, a young man, he was already virtually an alien. Already he was a disciple of Flaubert,

Turgenieff, Balzac, and Maupassant. At twenty-two, he was contributing to the *Atlantic Monthly* and not very long thereafter he transferred his residence to the place where his heart was—Europe, and chiefly England.

Then began that series of studies of European writers, of European scenes, of novels, tales, short stories laid mostly in the Europe familiar to him, of pensions and hotels in Italy, Switzerland, France, England. His Americans were almost always the Americans who travelled or resided in Europe, and his realism was the realism of their aloof lives. His people were the people one thinks of in the phrase "there is not a soul in town"—excluding the great mass of the population.

"He had been reared," observes Professor F. L. Pattee in his *American Literature since 1870*, "in a cloister-like atmosphere where he had dreamed of 'life' rather than lived it . . . . He had played in his childhood with books rather than boys . . . he had never mingled with men in a business or a professorial way; he had never married; he stood aloof from life and observed it without being a part of it. Americans he knew chiefly from the specimens he had found in Europe . . . European society he knew as a visitor from without. With nothing was he in sympathy in the full meaning of the word. . . . ." Even an idea, as an English critic observes, he had never "caressed with the sensitive fingertips of affection."

His novels by consequence are in a sense thin and shadowy and devoid of the clash and stir of life. Even his most American novel, *The American*, presents in Christopher Newman, the self-made millionaire, such an American as could never have made himself or even the wash-tubs by the manufacture of which he is supposed to have prospered. And yet James was doubtless a great artist. His love of the English tongue was probably the supreme passion of his life.

England was his natural habitat. Not even the poet Clough loved the green fields of England more than did James,

but what he chiefly loved were the traditions, the great parks and palaces, the leisured people who lived beautiful subtle lives, remote from clash and vulgarity, who knew nothing of common pains or common suffering—exquisite natures, like himself. This, which to many appears as snobbishness, is more generously interpreted by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks as a form of romanticism, a love of the romantic in life.

Of his book, *The Portrait of a Lady,* he wrote apologetically to Stevenson: " 'Tis surely a graceful, ingenious elaborate work, with too many pages, but with (I think) an interesting subject and a good deal of life and style." Few artists were more conscious of their merits and, except for the word "life," the quotation might well apply to a large portion, to nearly all of James's work. "Graceful, ingenious, elaborate," —subtle and brilliant, he might have added, and with more style than any American writer before him had yet achieved.

Art was the only deity of his worship and like one of his characters in *The Tragic Muse,* he had arrived early at a perception "of the perfect presence of mind, unconfused, unhurried by emotion, that any artistic performance required and that all, whatever the instrument, require in the same degree." . . . James's was, however, an art too subtle for the larger public.

"But art may be great without being popular," defensively comments Carl Van Doren in his *The American Novel,* and to that view Henry James evidently reconciled himself when he settled down at Lamb House in that narrow street in Rye that was his home to the end of his life. There he continued to add to his long list of novels and studies, writing for an audience grown more and more tenuous. Decorum, manners, style, passions delicate and subtle, were his preoccupation and from these the modern world was moving rapidly away. I shall not enumerate his long list of writings that fill thirty volumes, nor endeavour to compare him to anyone, with the

possible exception of Marcel Proust, perhaps his literary descendant.

> "He is the creator," concludes Mr. Van Doren, "of a world immensely beautiful in its own right: a world of international proportions, peopled by charming human beings who live graceful lives in settings almost beyond description . . . a world infinitely refined, a world perfectly civilised . . . In literature, the danger is that such a world will gradually fade out as dreams fade, and as the old romances of feudalism have already faded."

Indeed, that world is already visibly fading.

§ 2

Just as realism or naturalism is presently the keynote of American writing, so during the sixties it began to float over the land—during the period of the Civil War and directly after. Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871) was a realistic novel of the Indiana backwoods life which aimed to show that human nature was the same in rural Indiana as in more settled New England. But William Dean Howells was the first outspoken apostle of realism. It was his creed that "the sincere observer of man will not desire to look upon his heroic or occasional phases, but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness."

William Dean Howells

Like a gentle Lochinvar, Howells came out of the West, from his native Ohio, and captivated the refined New England public with his completely fashioned, charming style, his geniality, his grace. "He has the incapacity to be common," announced the *North American Review* in a notice of one of his early books. From the first his gentle, placid eighteenth century realism charmed by its finish, polish, and absence of crudeness. His theory of the novel was that "the moving accident was certainly

not its trade; and it prefers to avoid all manner of dire catastrophes." James he described as a character-painter, not a story-teller, and it is after all, he declared, "what a writer has to say rather than what he has to tell that we care for nowadays."

That was in 1882, when Howells was forty-five.

From Martin's Ferry, Ohio, he had made his way via Venice, Boston, and the *Atlantic Monthly* editorship to the position of the greatest force of his day in American letters.

It is easy now for Mr. H. L. Mencken to say:

> The profound dread and agony of life, the surge of passion and aspiration, the grand crash and glitter of things, the tragedy that runs eternally under the surface—all this the critic of the future will seek in vain in Dr. Howells's elegant and shallow volumes.

Whatever the critic of the future may do, the critic of the present does not even trouble to look for these things, since avowedly Howells had no intention of putting them there. Crash and glitter are remote from states of "vacancy and tiresomeness." The art of fiction, he held, has become a finer art in our day than it was with Dickens and Thackeray. "We could not suffer the confidential attitude of the latter now, nor the mannerism of the former." He did not know what we could learn to suffer if sufficiently interested. He died too soon to read *Main Street.*

It was during this post-*Atlantic* period, from 1881, after having already published fifteen volumes, that he began the series of his maturer novels outstanding among which are *The Rise of Silas Lapham, A Modern Instance,* and *The Quality of Mercy,* published in England as *Defalcation.*

Trained editor as he was, his tales as a rule possessed the "happy ending," despite the enunciated canons of his art. "I own that I like a finished story," he said, though on a public platform the present writer heard him apologetically confessing that his trammels were due to false models in his youth. Novels,

stories, essays, travel, farces, came pouring out from then on, out of a saturation, as James might have said, that must have been immense. But always it was not the "moving" accident that figured in the fictions, nor any catastrophe that was "dire," but the American manners of his age.

The influence upon Howells of Tolstoy, when it came later, made itself felt in such works as *The Traveler from Altruria,* in a certain fine altruism and sympathy with the downtrodden. But it had, on the whole, small effect upon his novels. Like James, remarks Mr. Pattee, "he schooled himself to distrust the emotions and to work wholly from the intellect. One smiles at the flashes of wit, one seldom laughs. No one ever shed a tear over a page either of Howells or James."

Both were accomplished artists, both advanced the American novel to a new position, but neither the one nor the other had any particular message to convey. By consequence, the present generation has nothing but a dim respect for them as artists—no more.

§ 3

There is far greater human interest in the work of O. Henry and Jack London.

O. Henry and Jack London

O. Henry (1867-1910) was the pen-name of William Sydney Porter, who began life as a bank cashier, was charged with embezzlement, escaped to South America, but finally surrendered to justice. The sentence was five years in the Ohio Penitentiary. Being made night-warder in the prison infirmary, he passed the long hours of silence in writing tales, which appeared in the pages of various magazines. When he came out of prison he had already a public, and before the end of his short life he had turned out something like two hundred stories.

O. Henry is one of the born story-tellers of the world. He

is a master alike of tragedy, romance, and extravaganza, of tales of mystery or of common life, with especial skill in stories of the supernatural, such as *The Furnished Room*. Nothing can be more quietly realistic than *The Trimmed Lamp*, a tale of two city work-girls, the one who is all for having "a good time," the other for the things of the spirit; nothing more comic than *The Passing of Black Eagle*, in which a tramp with a gift of the gab becomes leader of a band of bandits and who vanishes in the very act of holding up a train; nothing more pathetic than *The Last Leaf*, the story of a sick girl's fancy that her life will fail with the falling of the last leaf from the tree outside her window, which her lover fixes with a bit of wire. Such are samples of a hundred stories which no other man could have invented, or could have related with such charm and magic of style.

Jack London (1876-1916) was born at San Francisco. He went as a boy to the Klondike gold-mines, shipped before the mast, travelled half over the world, and tramped in almost every state in the Union. He was an uneven writer, with an intense zest for life, a keen appreciation of everything masculine and vigorous, and a tender heart for both animals and men. Far and away his best book is *The Call of the Wild*, a dog story of the Frozen North.

§ 4

The charge of imitation that lay against American writers, and notably against American novelists, the charge of imitating European novels was, as we have seen, not wholly confuted by even such talents as those of Henry James and William Dean Howells.

James had his models in Turgenieff, in Flaubert, in George Eliot, and Howells, though he enumerates many models in his youth, from Heine to Tolstoy, seems a sort of American Jane Austen. All literature is interrelated and even Dante avowed

the inspiration of Vergil and Brunetto Latini. But never was the charge less justified than in the American letters of to-day.

Beginning roughly with the third decade of the twentieth century, a burst of vitality made itself felt in American writing, of originality and power, so that perhaps for the first time since the coming of Walt Whitman, Europeans are again becoming seriously interested in American books.

Sinclair Lewis

With the publication of *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis, an amazing phenomenon appeared in American letters. A vast number of readers hitherto preoccupied chiefly with the cheaper grade of made-to-order fiction, began to display interest in fiction of a different sort. They beheld in *Main Street* a picture, realistic, honest, sincere, even if somewhat one-sided, not of themselves to be sure, but obviously of their next-door neighbours. It was a mirror held up not to their own nature, but to the nature very close to their own, which they instantly recognised as their near environment. And denizens of the small prosaic towns innumerable that fill the map of the United States paused long enough from their cheap magazines and cheap reprints to buy and read a photographic, somewhat angrily satirical, but very sound, novel depicting themselves. It was as though the Dark People of the Russian realists had suddenly emerged from their darkness to see themselves as the great Russian writers have painted them.

Main Street, one-sided though it be, created a genuine sensation in American fiction. It marked an epoch and a beginning. The old sentimentalities and beliefs left hanging as frayed ends and tatters from the days when a rude pioneer civilisation rigidly and blindly, of stern necessity, must needs regard every member of a sparse community as elect until he violated the code, were suddenly displayed with startling clarity, in garish relief. Pioneer days were ancient history. A new civilisation was crash-

ing about their ears, with new ideas, ideals of culture and progress and there they were in their little Gopher Prairies stewing in a stupidity that smelt to heaven. The Gopher Prairies and Sauk Centres, in a word, suddenly became self-conscious. Dimly they began to realise that however good the salt of the earth may be in measure, it is useless as the sole article of diet—that salt moreover can produce absolute sterility, as in the well-known case of the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The successor to *Main Street, Babbitt,* was another revealing novel, similar, yet different in that it set forth humorously, gaily, ironically the mental and spiritual anatomy of what might be called the mean American, the average business man, the "mixer," the "good fellow." Any business man in America whose religion is "getting on" might read the book and wonder vaguely whether he was Babbitt . . . . One can think of nothing in England with which to compare these two novels of Lewis, though portions of the work of both Wells and Bennett present similarities. Sinclair Lewis is still a young man—under forty—and is only at the threshold of his career. He has lived in the environments he describes and was himself born in a small town in Minnesota. He published other books prior to *Main Street* and *Babbitt.* But it is these two that count—less for their art than for their epochal tendency and significance.

But the signs of vitality in American letters are not, of course, confined to Lewis. Both before and since the publication of his two books, there has been a very marked display of literary production of distinction.

Edith Wharton

Mrs. Edith Wharton, who began as a disciple of Henry James and his French literary forbears, is still writing novels which have less merit than *Ethan Frome* or *The House of Mirth,* but which are none the less distinguished work. Originality has never been Mrs. Wharton's salient characteristic, but

meticulous care always. She is never slipshod or cheap and, though a cold unemotional light illumines most of her work, like winter moonlight, she is never gushing or tawdry. Her work, with some exceptions, is confined to depicting the life of America's "idle rich," those fine flowers of our peculiar plutocracy, whose spores, oddly, always come up as weeds. She has described them admirably, their history, morphology and mating, and her work is the standard fictional contribution to the subject.

But of late, notably since the great war, there has been evidence of a diminishing interest in that portion of society. Mrs. Wharton has published many volumes—novels, short stories, belles-lettres. In the nature of things, her work has probably seen its best days. In England she is vaguely comparable to Miss May Sinclair, though her great prototype was, of course, Henry James. But despite the fact that she is of the older persuasion of American novelists, she is in a manner the first ironist at the expense of that Gilded Age of American history, just now closing, that followed the Civil War. It was the age when Mr. Rockefeller and the late Andrew Carnegie were the most heroic of figures because their fortunes became vast; when the tacit but rigid assumption was that to follow art was to go the way of perdition; when salvation lay along the road of acquisition, and virtually all the standards were set by the masters of acquisitiveness. Edith Wharton was the first to bring a cold impersonal and consistent light of irony upon the top layer of an acquisitive society. The revolt now is in full cry. But in her manner—by no means the full-throated manner of to-day—she was a pioneer.

Theodore Dreiser

Theodore Dreiser, a cruder, more formless sort of realist than Mrs. Wharton, descended further down into the pits of life for his characters and studies, but in a sort they are contemporaries and colleagues. Where Mrs. Wharton followed

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Mother Sereda, "a woman no longer young, dressed all in blue and wearing a
ite towel by way of head-dress." James Branch Cabell's tale of old years of a
n's vain journeyings in search of rationality and justice, though it was at one
ne suppressed, may be read by all in view of the delicacy and pure-mindedness
the Jurgen myth

HETTY SORREL

The above illustrations is taken from W. D. Howells's *Heroines of Ficti*
It shows Hetty Sorrel in very different circumstances from those depicted
the Hon. J. Collier's picture reproduced on another page of this OUTLI
There disaster had come to George Eliot's heroine. Here she triumphs in
beauty and dreams of Arthur Donnithorne's love. To quote Howells, "S
was going to let down her hair and make herself look like that picture of a la
in Miss Lydia Donnithorne's drawing-room. It was soon done, and the d
hyacinthine curves fell on her neck."

I recognised brother Ange
who was making off with such speed that he
kicked himself with his sandalled feet as he ran

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Ltd., from At the Sign of the Reine Pedauque

Anatole France's powers of description are so great that one reads his descriptions leap right from the printed page. Here the luckless Brother Ange is hotly pursued by the wenches of the village inspired by their master who cheers on and encourages them with voice and gesture. A fine, fat little Swabian beauty. Heavy tongue brute.

the elegant French realism of Henry James, so dexterous of fence, so sophisticated, polished, Dreiser turned spontaneously toward the naturalism that in Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, and Stephen Crane, marked the protest against James's exquisiteness, against Howells's avoidance of "dire catastrophe."

> "Personally," declares Mr. Van Doren, "Mr. Dreiser displays almost alone among American novelists, the characteristics of what for lack of a better native term we have to call the peasant type—the type to which Gorki belongs and to which Tolstoy wanted to belong."

An American peasant, and in especial a literary peasant, is sufficiently rare to be notable. Mr. Dreiser, moreover, has had ample opportunity at sophistication, for he has been a journalist and an editor in New York—editor, oddly, of a woman's fashion magazine. Nevertheless, it is true that a certain uncouthness hangs about Dreiser, about his style and his point of view. He carries, according to Mr. Van Doren, "wherever he goes the true peasant simplicity of outlook, speaks with the true peasant's bald frankness, and suffers a peasant confusion in the face of complexity."

The simple, non-introspective type of American money-maker, the Cowperwood of *The Financier* and *The Titan,* who moves across the scene of his exploits like some powerful animal, elemental, single-purposed, single-minded to his goal of wealth, is the ideal character for Mr. Dreiser's pen. With a mass of detail, crude, almost un-selected, Mr. Dreiser crowds his chronicle of the financier in much the spirit that he depicts the fallen women "Sister Carrie" and "Jennie Gerhardt."

These are of life, he seems to say, of the turgid moving mass of American life as much as, and more, a part of life than the "vacancy and tiresomeness" approved by Howells and the Bostonians. And this rugged honesty brings to Dreiser's work a certain largeness and dignity, a certain seriousness that appears more Russian than American, a tone of authority that only genius can

bring forth. Mr. Dreiser is still living and working and none can say what he may yet accomplish.

Booth Tarkington

The same may be said of Dreiser's contemporary and fellow-Indianian, Mr. Booth Tarkington.

Tarkington looms very large in American popular esteem. In some respects he has a popularity reminiscent of Mark Twain's. He is versatile, adroit, with a flexible attractive style and he possesses the gift of humour, more prized by the larger American public than any other gift. He is also a playwright and something of a publicist.

In his fiction he has been accused by critics of catering too consistently to sentimentality, of swallowing the prevailing Indianian, indeed, American, spirit of "boosterism" almost whole. Mr. Van Doren has called him "the perennial sophomore."

If this accusation be true, it must be remembered that Tarkington began his literary apprenticeship at a very indeterminate period of American history—the end of the last century. For a young man who left the university at that time with the avowed intention of being a writer, the necessary, the inevitable postulate was, becoming a successful writer. The Gilded Age was still in full tide and rare was the spirit who could throw overboard the idea of success. Also the romantic period was at its height, and *The Gentleman from Indiana* and *Monsieur Beaucaire* were fair specimens of a clever young man's experimenting before he found himself. Then came a somewhat wandering life in Europe and other novels with the humorous digression of the *Penrod* stories and *Seventeen,* that are not meant to be serious studies of boyhood and adolescence, but merely what they are—pure fun.

In the novel *The Turmoil,* where Bibbs Sheridan, the ugly duckling of an industrial family, but a fine spirit, a poet, finally succumbs to the family industrialism, Mr. Tarkington already

shows signs of revolt. With *Alice Adams*, however, Mr. Tarkington demonstrated that if he can make fun of youth he can also see its underlying pathos. The novel is brief, with no great reason for digressions, but the reader readily senses the writer's attitude of ironical criticism regarding our industrialism, privilege, snobbishness, all the things that the new revolt is revolting against. Indeed, so versatile is Tarkington that he can carry off whatever he may set his hands to. He is, in his way, as versatile as Mr. John Galsworthy, though less concerned with meliorism or propaganda, nor does he pretend to a Galsworthy social conscience. Primarily Mr. Tarkington is an entertainer.

§ 5

The new epoch in American letters and notably in American fiction, is fitly signalised by the appearance of *Main Street*. But no epoch, literary or otherwise, commences at a certain date or at a certain hour precisely, upon the striking of a clock. It grows out of much, out of all, that has gone before. Literature in particular is a web, irregular in texture, shot with golden threads or blurred by dull spots, but still a continuous fabric unfolding.

Just as Mrs. Wharton, Dreiser, and Tarkington were writing before Lewis and Sherwood Anderson, so others wrote, so many another contributed his thread to the weaving, and shades of difference were already visible long before James and Howells laid down their pens.

Hamlin Garland

Hamlin Garland was one of the first to revolt against the bright and smiling pictures of America of the Gilded Age, against the false romanticism that fictionists embroidered upon the stern reality of life on the borders, on the prairies, on the western frontier. The restlessness now often visible in ex-soldiers of the Great War was no less common among veterans of the Civil War. Hamlin Garland's father was such a restless spirit,

to whom the distance always beckoned, after his homecoming. And as Mr. Garland has well recounted in his *A Son of the Middle Border*, the father moved the family first from Wisconsin to Iowa and then to the bleakness of the Dakotas, and always there was the fresh start in a barren country abounding only in soil and fertility, but in nothing else indispensable to men.

For to whatever hopes and ambitions that country may have held out encouragement, it certainly held nothing for anyone with ambitions toward learning or art, with hopes of culture or cultivated society. The hardships, the numbing toil, the almost maddening solitude constituted Mr. Garland's themes in such early books of grim realism as *Main Travelled Roads, Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* and *Prairie Folks*. His books shattered many of the illusions upon which prospective pioneers are fed and, in their day, a generation ago, created what amounted to a sensation. The sanctity, the freedom, the beauty of pioneer life was one of the necessary myths created in a country in need of new and constantly increasing numbers of settlers. Mr. Garland's assault was something in the nature of an attack on vested interests, always a bold and temerarious undertaking in America. He attracted to himself a very considerable degree of attention.

> "But whereas Sinclair Lewis," observes Mr. Van Doren, "in an intellectual and satiric age, charges that the villagers are dull, Mr. Garland, in a moral and pathetic age, charged that the farmers were oppressed. His men wrestle fearfully with sod and mud and drought and blizzard, goaded by mortgages which may at almost any moment snatch away all that labor and parsimony have stored up."

His women dry up and wither with overwork and privation. The life as a whole is intolerable. Mr. Garland felt the tragedy so keenly that a saying credited to him in those early days, was, "What is Shakespeare to the great Western prairies?" His zeal

was tremendous and the impression he made correspondingly significant.

The demands of editors and publishers, as is the way with a celebrity, led Mr. Garland away into fiction of less and less importance and brought him almost to the fold of those stereotyped romancers of the West that his own earliest work had aimed to shatter. But *A Son of the Middle Border,* an autobiographic chronicle of those earlier years that had resulted in *Main Travelled Roads,* brings back some of his earlier strength, mellowed by time. It is lyrical, epic, a sort of *Wahrheit und Dichtung* of the middle border—very beautiful. Mr. Garland is still living, and it is to be hoped that he will produce further fiction of significance.

§ 6

Other Novelists

As in all countries, there is a group of writers of fiction in America of varying fecundity, of diverse tastes and abilities, whose talents are not sufficiently great, notwithstanding their seriousness, to make them loom very large to their contemporaries. Possibly posterity will shuffle the cards and arrange the deck far otherwise.

Robert Herrick, a professor of English in the University of Chicago, is one such novelist. He is serious, capable, workmanlike and the chief theme of a number of his novels is the extravagance, hardness, and what might be described as general soullessness of the pampered, overprotected American woman of the prosperous middle class. His is one phase of the general criticism recently directed against the rather sprawling amorphous life in present-day America, a land grown so fast that it has barely had time for articulation and the setting of character. As in pre-revolutionary Russia, the novelists are and for some time have been supplying the polemics and prophecies against unheeding generations.

The Healer, The Common Lot, Clark's Field, Together, are some of the titles of Mr. Herrick's novels. After a silence roughly coincident with the Great War, Mr. Herrick has again taken up his pen.

Winston Churchill, similarly, though he has written with great financial success, is never included with the first group of American writers. When historical novels were the fashion, Mr. Churchill could match the best of sellers with *Richard Carvel*, with *The Crisis, The Crossing*. With the subsidence of the historical novel he braced himself to other tasks. With zeal and earnestness he tackled politics, the church, woman, but somehow the meed given to the highest has always been withheld from him by critics.

Upton Sinclair, a radical, a socialist, a reformer, is widely known by one novel, *The Jungle*. And yet Sinclair is one of the most voluminous writers in America. Were he possessed of humour and imagination as he is of zeal and sincerity, he might easily have been an American H. G. Wells. Even as it is, his novels and other writings, economic, sociological, polemical, are touched with a fervour that at times looks very much like genius.

But a fervent socialist writing in America to-day, assaulting the interests that Mr. Sinclair is always assaulting, must be a very great genius indeed to triumph. And Mr. Sinclair is scarcely that. However well-meant may be his last novel, *They Call Me Carpenter,* no one could call it a work of genius.

Likewise, there are such novelists as Ellen Glasgow, Ernest Poole, William Allen White, Henry B. Fuller, Gertrude Atherton, Brand Whitlock and Mary Austin, all of whom have been respected by critics, and in varying degrees by the public. Each of these has written at least one book notable to their contemporaries. Some of them moreover are widely known—William Allen White and Brand Whitlock as publicists and Mrs. Atherton as author of *The Conqueror* and a literary figure in Europe as well as in her own country.

But the brevity of this account necessarily precludes more extended analysis. In the same way there are a number of fictionists commonly called young, like Ben Hecht, Katherine Fullerton Gerould, Wilbur D. Steele, Thomas Beer, Harry Leon Wilson, Edna Ferber, Fannie Hurst, Dorothy Canfield, Edith Wyatt, Cosmo Hamilton, Rupert Hughes, Harvey O'Higgins, whom it is here impossible to classify or analyse. They are many of them short-story writers.

§ 7

Zona Gale

Almost with these only a little while ago might have been classed Miss Zona Gale. For a number of years, she had enjoyed what Mr. Van Doren describes as "a comfortable standing among the sweeter set." Her preoccupation was with the gentle neighbourly kindliness of Friendship Village, somewhere in the Middle West, a sort of Sweet Auburn, Cranford, plus America, rolled into one pleasant demesne.

In 1920, however, she burst suddenly upon the American public with *Miss Lulu Bett,* and, behold, she was one of the "younger realists." It appeared almost as though she had lingered in sweetness under duress and, once the spirit of the times released her, she burned to tell the truth about village complacency and village hypocrisy. Her transition, to be sure, was marked by an earlier novel called *Birth* which, as Miss Gale herself declares, "no human eye has ever seen." It was *Miss Lulu Bett,* however, that revealed her as a searching realist of a subtle and penetrating irony and humour who could portray the hypocrisy and selfishness of a "leading citizen" even more ably than she had been wont to skim the milk of human kindness. *Miss Lulu Bett* was immediately acclaimed, dramatised, discussed, and, though it never reached the popularity of Sinclair Lewis's recent books, it has added to the number of whips that

have come to scourge self-complacency out of the American temple. A later novel *Faint Perfume* is permeated by so much fineness and exquisite perception, that Miss Gale is now well established in the first group.

Much of the milk of human kindness, it appears all at once, is in need of stern chemical analysis. And the fact that books supplying this analysis are widely popular to-day, is regarded as a notably healthy sign in the life of the American democracy. Correctives in a democracy do not always come swiftly, but that they make their appearance ultimately and surely is of the very essence of the democratic ideal. Miss Gale in her new phase displays literary traits in common with Miss May Sinclair and Miss Rose Macaulay, though, of course, no exact parallel can lie. In subtlety of delineation she has no superiors in America.

Sherwood Anderson

Sherwood Anderson is another of America's younger realists, more discussed than read, but with a definite standing and position. He has a method of his own that might be described as unvarnished candour, but differing markedly from Theodore Dreiser. He is briefer, more selective. His objectivity is more coloured with the personality of the observer. His inner cry is against the disorder, confusion, futility of modern American life. Like H. G. Wells, he abhors that confusion. He is shocked to observe "how men, coming from Europe and given millions of square miles of black fertile land, mines and forests, have failed in the challenge given them by fate and have produced out of the stately order of nature only the sordid disorders of man." And that sad shortcoming in human nature troubles many American writers to-day. He offers no solution. He presents the disorder, the confusion, the dumb longing for better things. He is simply an element in the general revolt. The pioneer dignity, he seems to say, has frayed out together with the pioneer spirit, and

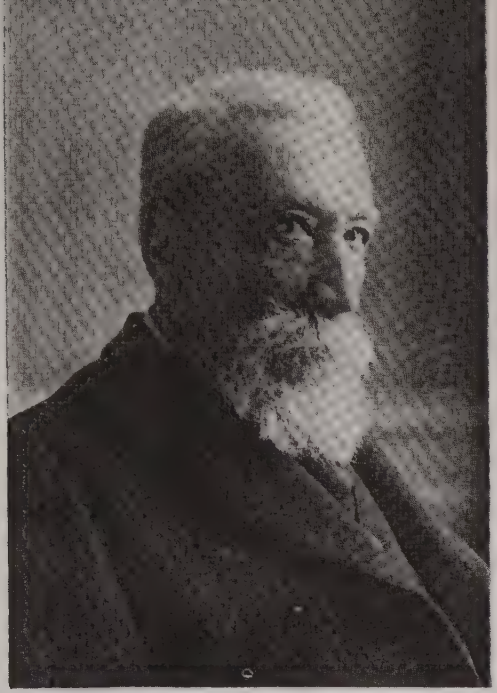


Photo: Henri Manuel.

ANATOLE FRANCE

The great French ironist.

Photo: E. N. A.

HENRI BARBUSSE

The author of the anti-war novels, *Le Feu* and *Clarté*, and one of the most popular novelists in France.

Photo: E. O. Hoppé.

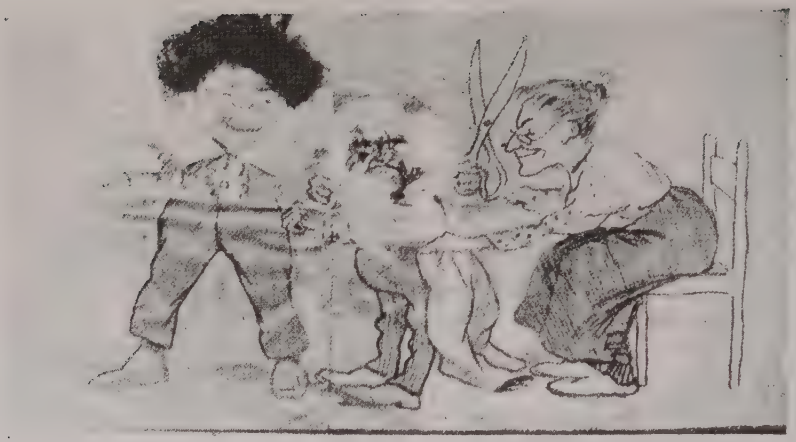
SINCLAIR LEWIS

The author of *Main Street* and *Babbitt* and the most forcible of all modern American novelists.

Photo: E. O. Hoppé.

HENRY JAMES

The American writer of novels, in which style and manner count for everything



VALENTINE

Drawn by O. Henry in 1895 for Margaret, his little daughter, to give to a playmate; it was executed during the period when he was editor of the *Rolling Stone*. He was a great favourite with the children who lived near his home in East Fourth Street.

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THE BLUE BIRD: THE CHILDREN RECOUNT THEIR ADVENTURES

From the Colour Illustration by F. Cayley Robinson

It is [illegible] that children have [illegible] such outstanding Plays presented to them as was the case when within a few years of each other Sir James Barrie gave them *Peter Pan* and Maeterlinck his *Blue Bird*. The incident depicted above taken from the *Blue Bird* shows Mytyl and Tyltyl on their return from the quest of the Blue Bird

nothing fine has taken their place. That plaint is the heart and front of the general revolt.

> "It is characteristic of Sherwood Anderson's art," observes a critic, "that instead of seeking escape from life and forgetfulness of it, he grapples with it in an effort to set the tortured spirit free from its servitude to matter. . . . He will make no compromises with life and no false claims for himself. He has done with illusions. He has put behind him the conventional armour of fiction. He engages in his struggle naked and empty-handed."

The result of this struggle is still somewhat crude, somewhat formless, though of undoubted reality and sincerity.

"I am a helpless man—my hands tremble," he confesses in one of his verses.

> "For a long time," he acknowledges in a sort of apologia, "I have believed that crudity is an inevitable quality in the production of a really significant present-day American literature. How indeed is one to escape the obvious fact that there is as yet no native subtlety of thought or living among us? And if we are a crude and childlike people how can our literature hope to escape the influence of that fact? Why indeed should we want to escape? . . ."

His novels *Windy McPherson's Son, Marching Men, Poor White,* and his collections of stories *Winesburg, Ohio,* and *The Triumph of the Egg,* all in a manner corroborate and exemplify this creed. Though his latest novel, *Many Marriages,* points to a preoccupation with sex somewhat after the manner of D. H. Lawrence.

There are other novelists of this new and stern realistic creed in America, such as Floyd Dell, Charles G. Norris, John Dos Passos, Evelyn Scott, Waldo Frank, who cannot be scrutinised at length. But by no means all the younger novelists of

significance are pure realists. Willa Cather is a robust capable realistic writer, but she depends still upon the epic-heroic quality of pioneers for her protagonists. Joseph Hergesheimer is certainly not a realist and as for James Branch Cabell, he was forced to invent a faery sort of mediæval Cockayne, the land of Poictesme, for the scene of his ironic fantastic romances.

James Branch Cabell

Cabell is a writer of signal originality and marked resistance to classification. His adhesion to the fantastic philosophical romance is unique in America. There is in him something of Voltaire and something of Maurice Hewlett, but very much more of himself. His very titles—*Figures of Earth, The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, Domnei*—in a measure indicate his preoccupation.

> "He is an imagist in prose," declares Mr. H. L. Mencken. "You may like his story and you may not like it, but if you don't like the way he tells it there is something the matter with your ears. As for me, his experiments with words caress me, as I am caressed by the tunes of old Johannes Brahms. How simple it seems to manage them—and how infernally difficult it actually is."

It was not until the publication of *Jurgen,* however, in 1919, that Cabell attracted a wider attention. *Jurgen* is many things, a romance, a prose-poem of gallantry, a fantasy, an odyssey of the human soul in quest of romance and beauty. But for some reason it drew upon itself the displeasure of one Sumner the current embodiment of Comstockism in America, and was "suppressed." At once collectors began to seek it and pay fancy prices for it. A court of law has since released the book from duress and it may be had at the normal price. But the imprisonment of the book has brought long-deferred celebrity to its author. For despite his medium, he is of the present movement

of dissatisfaction. Though his matter be poetic romance of an imaginary land, rich with reading and burdened with allusion, it yet expresses dissatisfaction with present-day life and conditions. He seeks "escape" from life, but rather in the manner of Rabelais and Cervantes than in that of his lesser contemporaries. This life to him lacks savour and beauty. His heroes must escape to Poictesme and to other centuries to try their love and meet their fate. His avowed ideal, "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings," cannot to-day be satisfied upon American and possibly not upon any other known soil.

> "It is only by preserving faith in human dreams that we may after all, perhaps, some day make them come true . . ." observes Hugh Walpole in commenting on Cabell's work. "And with the ending of Jurgen's chronicle, we can acclaim with no uncertain voice the definite arrival of a talent as original and satisfying as anything our time has seen."

There is no one now writing in Europe to compare with him.

Joseph Hergesheimer

Joseph Hergesheimer, still young as novelists go, in the early forties, is already a writer of distinction, noted for painstaking artistry and acute observation. "Standing thus in the middle ground between art and artifice," comments Mr. Van Doren, "Mr. Hergesheimer stands also in a middle ground between the unrelieved moralism of the older." His style, a highly elaborated medium, and certainly over-decorative, appears to some tastes heavy. But his veriest short story displays almost the same careful workmanship to be found in such of his novels as *The Three Black Pennys, Java Head,* and *Linda Condon.* Decoration, the phrase, the rhythm of his prose are of greater moment to him than any unrest or moral preoccupation. His constant complaint is that women readers, with their craving

for sentimentality, are a blighting influence upon the American fiction of the age. This supposed craving for sweets, however, has in no way adversely affected the success of the new realists.

Miss Willa Cather, upon the other hand, does not complain. She has evolved a medium of her own by which to depict the West that she knows, the broad glowing fields of wheat in Nebraska, the miles upon miles of stretching prairie-land, the fields of snow of unsheltered prairie winters, and the hardy souls who wring bread out of that earth. She uses a sort of lucid candid realism to portray the heroic simple qualities still demanded by that perennial combat. Women more often than men are her heroes as in the novels *O Pioneers! The Song of the Lark* and *My Antonia,* and usually they are foreign women of the sturdier stock of immigrant blood that goes upon the land instead of congesting city slums. Pioneers and artists are her protagonists. In both it is the single-minded devotion, the purposeful clinging to one dominating object that attracts her. She alone of present-day American novelists seems a direct descendant of Walt Whitman—no mean distinction. Her recent novel, *One of Ours,* though it won the Pulitzer prize for high merit, suffered from an impression of inadequacy for so grandiose an undertaking. Her hero, Claude, on his Nebraska prairie was superb, because Miss Cather knows the Nebraska prairie. Claude on the battlefield of France, how romanticised soever, shrank in stature because Miss Cather had not been there to watch him. But Miss Cather is possessed of talent enough and to spare to outlive one failure—or rather half-success. And in any case, her succeeding book, *A Lost Lady* is as perfect a thing as, say *Ethan Frome,* almost as Tolstoy's *The Cossacks.*

She at all events has never needed to revolt from the village, because she never was of the village. It is the broad fields and their tillers that she is most concerned with. The village or small town is to her little more than the tuckshop or candy-store to the schoolboy, a base of supplies.

§8

The "Revolt from the Village"

This "revolt from the village" according to a very pretty theory of Mr. Carl Van Doren's, is the source of all the recent outburst of American realism, *il dolce stil nuovo,* that is anything but sweet, and is indeed peculiarly acrid to the villagers. It dates, according to his thesis, from the year 1915. In 1915, many things were happening throughout the world and notably in Europe. The great struggle had settled down to trench warfare. Europe was girding its loins for a conflict destined to be long drawn out; literature in European countries was passing gradually into a total eclipse behind the greatest of all catastrophes, while America was anxiously watching. Little attention was being paid to letters. Nevertheless 1915 saw also the appearance of *Spoon River Anthology,* by a poet hitherto unknown to fame, Edgar Lee Masters. But for the war, the sensation it caused might have been very much more intense.

> "For nearly half a century," says Mr. Van Doren, "native literature had been faithful to the cult of the village, celebrating its delicate merits with sentimental affection and with unwearied interest digging into odd corners of the country for persons and incidents illustrative of the essential goodness and heroism which, so the doctrine ran, lie beneath unexciting surfaces."

Edgar Lee Masters

Mr. Masters came as an iconoclast with a simple device. He took such a churchyard or cemetery as any village might have and, instead of the customary epitaphs, wrote truthful and honest ones—such epitaphs, in short, as had never yet been chiselled in any churchyard. A volume of poetry had probably never before in America attracted attention so wide-spread or so sudden. And if he had overdone it, as he probably had, the scandal was nevertheless too obviously based upon common knowledge to be

ignored. The theory that the milk of human kindness runs sweetest in the village idiot suffered irreparable damage. Greed, hypocrisy, vileness, apathy—they were in the village, announced Mr. Masters, at least as frequently as anywhere else. Oh, yes, there were saints and poets and heroes,—like Lincoln—but how small was their number. It is probably true that to none do the modern realists owe more than to Masters and his *Spoon River Anthology*.

It was as though bonds had been suddenly loosened and young writers of America with a sense of release and vast relief, said: "Thank Heaven! Village autocracy. village worship, is at an end."

Sinclair Lewis, Zona Gale, Floyd Dell, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and others, burst into a sort of legitimate Walpurgis Night revel for the long suppressed desires. One result is that even the critics can now see beauty in scarcely anything else than this revolt. Critics in America, however, are few. The counter-revolution is already looked for. Nevertheless, conditions are hardly likely to be the same again as they were before the appearance of the *Anthology*.

Edgar Lee Masters has published a number of books since then, including fiction as well as verse, but nothing with the same novelty or significance as *Spoon River*.

Other Poets

When one undertakes to examine the other American poets, the task becomes overwhelming. Mr. Howard Willard Cook's excellent anthology, *Our Poets Today,* lists something upward of one hundred and twenty contemporary poets. Even to enumerate all their names would be impossible. The truth is, in this department also there is in process what amounts to a renaissance of creation.

Some to be sure, like Edwin Arlington Robinson, have been established for years past, his *Children of the Night* having

been published in 1897. In 1921 his *Collected Poems* showed a remarkable growth during the quarter century and confirmed his admirers in their belief, that here was an American poet of the first rank. And grouped with him in the more established phalanx may be set down such names as those of Mr. Vachel Lindsay, perhaps the most peculiarly American poet since Riley; George Edward Woodberry, Edwin Markham, Percy Mackaye, Witter Bynner, Louis Untermeyer, Carl Sandburg, Ezra Pound, Arthur Guiterman, Ridgley Torrence, Sara Teasdale, and the late Josephine Preston Peabody. There are doubtless many other names that might be deservedly added to these, but as already implied this is almost a random scattering.

And the newer names, those that have stood for some innovation in verse or, in general for the more recent outburst, are far more numerous still.

Miss Amy Lowell, for instance, though generally identified with the newer and younger schools of poets, began to publish in 1910 and in 1912 her first book of verse, *A Dome of Many-Colored Glass,* made its appearance. She became identified with the idea of revolt against older, more cramping forms and one began to hear of *vers-libre,* of imagism, and of polyphonic prose. (And if any reader desires a discussion of these new forms, he had better read Professor John Erskine's enlightening volume, *The Kinds of Poetry.)* Since then, Miss Lowell has been publishing steadily, criticism as well as poetry, and her work has brought her a deservedly high place among American poets.

Among others of the younger and more recent poets are Robert Frost, whose *North of Boston* showed the influence of Mr. Masters; Anna Hempstead Branch, Amelia Josephine Burr, William Rose Benèt, Stephen Vincent Benèt, Elinor Wylie, Arthur Ficke, Margaret Widdemer. T. S. Eliot, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), the two latter living in England, Maxwell Bodenheim and Edna St. Vincent Millay. This last name, though its owner was only five years old when Mr. Robinson's

Children of the Night was published, may yet, rise above all the names here recorded. To read her is to concede her genius and with every added year that genius grows. Already she has some half-dozen volumes of verse to her credit and each book contains something rare and priceless, the work of a fine lyric poet.

Dramatists

The outstanding American dramatist, beyond any doubt, is Eugene O'Neill. That young man, in his early thirties (he was born in 1888) seems to have crowded a lifetime of experience into a few brief years and he burst upon the public virtually full-fledged with his play, *Beyond the Horizon.* That play, a sincere realistic piece of work, was distinctly of the revolt—away from the machine-made and the sentimental and toward reality. Since then, succeeding plays like *The Hairy Ape,* a piece of realistic symbolism, *The Emperor Jones,* and that magnificent drama, *Anna Christie,* have established Mr. O'Neill's pre-eminence beyond question. His mordant, trenchant realism seems to have brought a new era to the American theater. It has made it possible, for instance, for a playwright like Owen Davis, long pre-occupied with the cheaper forms of dramatic entertainment, to turn to genuine drama and to produce such fine examples of serious, more or less realistic dramaturgy as *The Detour* and *Icebound.*

Since nearly everybody in America, so it is said, sooner or later writes a play, it is obviously impossible to survey all the playwrights here. A few of the earlier established dramatists who have done significant work may be mentioned: Augustus Thomas, David Belasco, James Forbes, Louis Anspacher, Philip Moeller, Edward Sheldon and Rachel Crothers. Booth Tarkington, who has already figured largely among the novelists, is a prolific playwright, and like his fellow-Indianian, George Ade, is given almost wholly to light comedy on the stage. Percy Mackaye, the poet, has contributed at least one unforgetable

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TOLSTOY—A CHARACTERISTIC POSE

The great Russian philosopher and novelist.

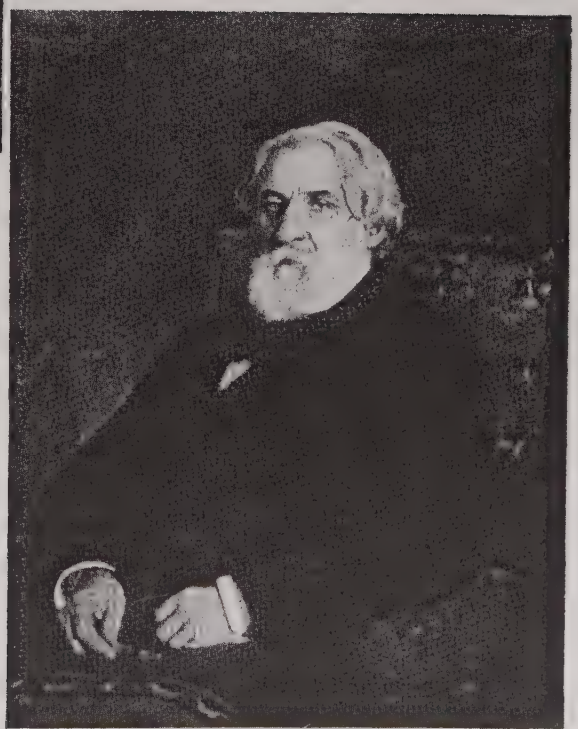

Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

IVAN TURGENEV

One of the three greatest Russian writers.

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THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

From the illustration in colour by Edmund Dulac

Here we have the final scene from Hans Andersen's tale of the foolish Emperor whose love for finery allowed two swindling weavers to impose on him. They pretended to make clothes of surpassing elegance which at the same time were invisible to anyone unfitted for the post he held. In point of fact they were making nothing at all, and when the day came for the King to pass in procession wearing his new clothes, neither he nor any member of his Court would admit that they couldn't see the glittering garments lest it might be thought that by such an admission they were unfitted to hold their posts.

The King passed through the streets, and all pretended to admire until a little child, innocent and with nothing to gain or lose, pricked the bubble by speaking its mind.

"But he has got nothing on," said the little child.

Photo Henri Manuel

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

The Italian poet and politician

drama to the American stage, *The Scarecrow,* and Charles Rann Kennedy, though an Englishman, is now, by long residence, identified with America. His play, *The Servant in the House,* remains a memorable contribution to the American stage.

Essayists and Critics

Essayists are scarce in America today. With the exception of Samuel McChord Crothers, John Jay Chapman, Robert Cortes Holliday, Richard Le Gallienne and John Erskine, American essayists are chiefly literary critics. And even of this small group the last two are better known respectively as poet and critic.

Great critics in America, as elsewhere, are rare. She has produced no Ste.-Beuve as yet, nor is she likely to produce one—until there is a greater and a richer literature to engross him. There is Georg Brandes, of course, who does not confine himself to his native Danish literature. He is cosmopolitan, international. And this note of cosmopolitanism, naturally enough, perhaps, in view of the composite population, is often the keynote of American criticism. Critics like Paul Elmer More, Professor George Edward Woodberry, W. C. Brownell, Agnes Repplier, or George Santayana have made all literature their domain. When they have studied American authors they seldom touched upon anyone outside the New England school or younger than Walt Whitman or Henry James.

Recently, however, as in other departments of literature, there has appeared a younger flight of critics, more nearly concerned with contemporary events in American letters. Between that older group and the younger, perhaps midway, stands the name of Professor Stuart P. Sherman. But of those chiefly concerned with contemporary literature are such men as Van Wyck Brooks, John Macy, the late Randolph Bourne, Wilson Follett, H. L. Mencken, Ludwig Lewisohn, William Lyon Phelps, H. Seidel Canby, John Erskine and Carl Van Doren.

In a sense much of the new contemporary writing in verse and prose has been stimulated by Bourne, Brooks, and Max Eastman. And even H. L. Mencken, who admires nothing, has expressed admiration for such diverse writers as Cabell and Scott Fitzgerald. But the last four names, those of Phelps, Canby, Erskine and Van Doren, are noteworthy because they are borne by college professors. A generation, even half a generation, ago, a college professor in America seldom troubled to occupy himself with the contemporary, unless it were someone universally acclaimed, like Robert Louis Stevenson, or Rudyard Kipling. (And neither of these was American.) But more recently Phelps, Canby, Erskine and Van Doren have done much to arouse national interest in contemporary American letters. By their books, lectures and articles, they have brought forward the merits and defects of current writers, have grouped, discussed and analysed them. They were aided not a little by that admirable quarterly, *The Yale Review*. And that in itself is a sign of the health and vitality of the new literary movements and expressions. Without sound criticism no literature can continue to grow, and the new American criticism appears as eager as do the creative branches.

These in turn are supported by and support a more widespread and searching newspaper criticism of books. Most of the larger American newspapers now have weekly book-pages and some like the New York *Times, Herald* and *Tribune,* carry separate weekly book-sections under the direction of competent critics. John Farrar of the *Bookman,* Dr. Clifford Smyth of the *International Book Review,* and Arthur Bartlett Maurice and Burton Rascoe of the *Herald* and the *Tribune* respectively, J. Brooks Atkinson of the *Times,* as well as E. W. Osborn and Heywood Broun of the *World,* are in a manner the alert scouts of the book world. The *Literary Review* of the New York *Evening Post* under the editorship of Mr. Canby is one of the ablest book-sections in any country. There are many others in

New York, Brooklyn, Boston, Chicago and throughout the United States. The Boston *Transcript*, for instance, probably devotes virtually as much space to books as does the London *Times*.

Brief as this account must of necessity appear, it has endeavoured to give an indication, how slight soever, of the forces at work in present-day American letters, the new elements and the older from which, however seemingly detached, the new must and measurably do spring. Nothing, for instance, has been said here of those realists of a quarter of a century ago, Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, both now dead, forerunners of some of our present-day realism; nothing of the late Jack London who, in his day, was a force in the more popular section of American fiction. And such a writer as Lafcadio Hearn, with his strange exotic flavour and genius, will find his place in literary history rather than in a chapter on contemporary writers. Nor can we here discuss such philosophic and sociological writers as Professor John Dewey, James Harvey Robinson, or Thorstein Veblen. Their work, immensely important, belongs in departments outside of belles-lettres. Similarly, such work as that of Miss Ida Tarbell, author of a *Life of Abraham Lincoln* and other biographical works, as well as of *A History of the Standard Oil Company*, a book of arresting importance in its day, slips out of the present classification. And in like manner, the very history of publishing has in America a large literature of its own. Thus, Dr. George Haven Putnam has, during a period of fifty years, published a number of books upon the subject, including such works as *Memories of a Publisher* (1865-1915), *The Censorship of the Church of Rome, Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages, Authors and Their Public in Ancient Times*, etc.

A preponderant amount of our space has been given over to the novelists. For the prose novel in America, as in most civilised countries to-day, largely overshadows all other forms.

It is displaying a vitality, a freedom, an exuberance unprecedented in its history. Numerous as are the writers touched upon only the most significant could here be mentioned. The more commercial types of writers, the hyper-sentimentalists, some of whom reach sales undreamed of in the philosophy of the more austere, it is clearly impossible to make place for in an outline of this brevity.

The reading public for books is at best small compared with that for newspapers and periodicals. But in a country where circulations of two millions and more for weekly and monthly periodicals are common, with a population of 110,000,000, given a literature that is alive and vital to its needs, almost any result, virtually any future is possible.

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§ 9

MODERN FRENCH WRITERS

Edmond Rostand

The most popular of modern French poets is Edmond Rostand, and his popularity owes not a little to the fact that Sarah Bernhardt produced his poetic dramas *La Princesse Lointaine* and *L'Aiglon.* Rostand was born at Marseilles in 1868. He was writing verses when he was eight and his first book of poems was published when he was twenty-one. His first play, *Les*

Romanesques, which has been translated and acted in English, was produced in 1894, and this was followed by *La Princesse Lointaine, Cyrano de Bergerac, L'Aiglon,* in which the poet writes with fine sympathy of the unfortunate son of the great Napoleon, and *Chanteclère,* in which he rhapsodises over the Gallic cock as the epitome of the spirit of France. In *Chanteclère* there is an ode to the sun which is perhaps Rostand at his best. Here are the last lines:

> Je t'adore, Soleil! Tu mets dans l'air des roses,
> Des flammes dans la source, un dieu dans le buisson!
> Tu prends un arbre obscur et tu l'apothéoses!
> O Soleil! toi sans qui les choses
> Ne seraient que ce qu'elles sont!

Anatole France

During the nineteenth century, the French literary genius found its fullest expression in the novel, and this is equally true of the twentieth century. Of the elder of the modern writers, Anatole France, Romain Rolland, and Pierre Loti are perhaps most interesting to foreign readers. The genius of Anatole France is comparable to that of the greatest of his predecessors. Even in his old age he continues to write with an amazing fertility of imagination, and he and Thomas Hardy are the two grand old men of European letters. Anatole France is the son of a poor Paris bookseller and was born in 1844. His real name is Thibaut, and he has said: "I was brought up amongst books by humble, simple people whom I alone remember."

Anatole France, the heir to the ironic tradition of Montaigne, Voltaire, and Renan, is a Parisian to the depths of his soul, an amiable cynical philosopher, believing neither in God nor man, a Socialist, in these days the apologist of Lenin and the Bolshevists, but with no great faith that Socialism or Communism can affect the essential irony of human life.

There is no doubt that all through his life Anatole France

has more or less agreed with the Abbé Coignard in his *La Reine Pédauque,* who said that he would not have signed the Declaration of the Rights of Man "because of the sharply defined and unjust distinction made in it between man and the gorilla."

Anatole France was thirty-seven when he first became famous with the publication of his novel *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard.* This has been followed by a long series of novels of which perhaps the most famous are the erotic Eastern story *Thais,* the allegorical *L'Isle des Penguins, Le Lys Rouge,* and the French revolutionary story *Les Dieux Ont Soif.* Perhaps his genius is most apparent in his charming short story *Crainquebille* and in that masterpiece of irony, *L'Histoire Comique. Crainquebille* was an old costermonger who was arrested and sent to prison for a fortnight because he refused to move on when ordered by a policeman. He was waiting for the money for some leeks that he had sold, but the magistrate would not listen to him. When he came out of prison he found that his customers had gone to another hawker and he grew poorer and poorer. In his despair, prison seemed the only possible shelter, so he grossly insulted a policeman, who only smiled and left him shivering in the rain.

Nowhere is the penetrating irony of Anatole France better exemplified than in *Penguin Island.* Saint Maël, after experiencing a great storm, lands on an island inhabited only by Penguins. The good Saint follows his vocation and proceeds to baptise them. Since they are baptised they become human beings with souls, and so into men and women they are transformed. Saint Maël then proceeds to tow the whole Penguin Island across the seas to the Breton coast. Being human beings, the Penguins have to be clothed, and clothed they are. Then the holy Maël "was troubled in spirit and his soul was sad. As with slow steps he went towards his hermitage, he saw the little Penguins tightening their waists with belts made of seaweed and walking along the shore to see if anybody would follow

them." And the good soul of Maël becomes sadder still, for the Penguins developed in human ways very rapidly as they began to get the idea of property, which begat other interesting notions.

L'Histoire Comique deals with the life of the Paris theatre, with its pettiness, its sham emotion, and its sordid intrigues. In the description of the funeral of the comedian Chevalier, Anatole France has written what is perhaps the greatest example of sustained irony in modern literature. The priest is singing the Requiem, and the mourners, the dead man's comrades, gossip under their breath.

> "I must be off to lunch."
> "Do you know anyone who knows the minister?"
> "Burville is a has been. He blows like a grampus."
> "Put me in a little paragraph about Marie Falempin. I can tell you she was simply delicious in *Les Trois Magots.*"

The same kind of trivial conversation goes on while the actors follow the hearse to the cemetery. At the graveside the manager speaks the usual eulogy.

> Grouped about the speaker in studied attitudes, the actors listened with profound knowledge. They listened actively, with their ears, lips, eyes, arms, and legs. Each listened in his own manner, with nobility, simplicity, grief, or rebelliousness, according to the parts which the actor was accustomed to play.
>
> And when the eulogy was finished
>
> The handkerchiefs were at work, wiping away the mourners' tears. The actors were weeping with all sincerity; they were weeping for themselves.

Anatole France once said: "Let us give to men, for their witnesses and judges, Irony and Compassion," and though in

his novels there is always irony, and sometimes bitter irony, the compassion is always there too. One of his most remarkable achievements is his long and detailed study of Joan of Arc, in which, sceptic as he is, he pays fine tribute to the best-loved saint of France. Anatole France is always lucid and he is always reticent. He detests the over-emphasis of a Zola, and the sensuality of his novels is an intellectual sensuality.

P. Loti

Pierre Loti, the pen-name of Louis Marie Julien Viaud, was born in 1850. He was brought up in an austere Protestant household, and he inherited the love of the sea which sent him into the navy when he was fourteen. The sea and the East were the formative influences in Loti's artistic life. He loved the sea as Joseph Conrad loves it, and this love is evident in all his novels, while his fascination for the East with its rather artificial and exotic idealism finds expression in his most famous novel, *Madame Chrysanthème*. Loti himself said that his books were based on "a great effort to achieve sincerity, to be absolutely true." As for his style, Paul Bourget wrote: "No one has ever written like Loti save Loti." N. Henry Davray says of him: "Infinity, the mysterious beyond, had a ceaseless fascination for him, as it has for all souls imbued with love and melancholy. One theme is always to be heard sounding insistently in everything he wrote; the fleeting and transitory nature of life and death ineluctable and omnipresent."

Other French Writers

Romain Rolland was born in Burgundy in 1866. Before he wrote his great novel, *Jean Christophe*, which is in ten volumes and certainly the longest novel in world literature, he had written interesting studies of the great composers and a book about Tolstoi, of whom he is a very evident disciple. Jean Christophe is an unhappy idealist, a German musician finding himself alien

in his own Rhenish country, wearying of Teutonic sensibility, escaping to France only to find himself surrounded by a different sort of insincerity, struggling unsuccessfully for years, then at last finding fame but never happiness. *Jean Christophe* has been rightly called "the most remarkable work of contemporary fiction." Its hero set out to lead the good life, to do no injustice, and to think no evil, and while Rolland has no illusions as to what must happen to a man of such ambition he emphasises Tolstoi's declaration that it is the only life worth living. The novelist himself is a confirmed internationalist. During the war he lived in Switzerland and he was the one notable pacifist among prominent Frenchmen.

§ 10

The years before the war saw the development in French life, and consequently in French literature, of a new spirit entirely different from the spirit of nineteenth-century France and entirely different from the scepticism of Renan and Anatole France. As Madame Duclaux says, the generation that adored truth and justice and freedom was followed by a generation that adored courage, activity, self-control, and faith. This change of mood is strikingly evident in the novels of Ernest Psichari, Renan's grandson, who substituted militarism, Catholicism, and mysticism for his grandfather's pacifism, scepticism, and rationalism. Writing in 1914 Anatole France confessed that "scepticism has gone out of fashion." The new spirit found its expression most notably in the writing of Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, and Henri Bergson. Barrès never forgot that in 1870 as a child of eight he saw the German army violating the sacred land of France. The spark of hatred then kindled flamed up many years later in his novels, *Au Service de l'Allemagne* and *Collette Baudoche* and in other works of fervent patriotism, which without question played a large part in ex-

citing the nationalistic energy that enabled France to endure the Great War and finally to play her large part in defeating the German armies.

One of the influences which indirectly led to it was the Bergsonian philosophy.

The Catholic Reaction

As far back as 1889, Henri Bergson had published that epoch-making book *Données Immédiates de la Conscience,* which had led the reaction against Herbert Spencer's philosophy.

Bergson's intuitional method of reasoning, his distinction between mind and matter, his theory of vitalism laid such hold on the younger French writers that they hailed him as a prophet and his philosophy as a new gospel, and they read into it much more than the philosopher ever intended, for one of them cried: "I felt God on every page."

Among the other French writers with established pre-War reputations, whose names must at least be mentioned, are Rémy de Gourmont, the novelist; Réné Boylesve, the author of many charming stories of Touraine; Henri Bordeaux, the novelist of Savoy whose *romans du foyer* (*fireside novels*) are sufficient proof that the French have a popular literature that is the very converse of sensuous; Réné Bazin, described by Madame Duclaux as "full of faith and hope and charity," whose latest book *Charles de Foucauld* is an important addition to the literature of mysticism; and the poets Francis Jammes and Paul Claudel.

The novelist Charles Peguy wrote in *Éve:* "Blessed are they who die in great battles." Little did he think when he wrote those words how soon that blessedness would be his. On the outbreak of war, he was a man of forty and the father of a struggling family: yet he changed at once from the Territorials to an active service regiment, and was killed at the battle of the Marne, one of nine hundred French writers of some degree of eminence who lost their lives in the war. "No war," said Paul

Bourget, "can ever have inspired the written testimony of the fighters to such a degree as the war of 1914." Little of this literature perhaps has much permanent value, but the war novels of Henri Barbusse and Georges Duhamel are an important addition to French literature.

Henri Barbusse

Le Feu (1916) by Barbusse is perhaps the greatest war book produced in any country. The author was one of the very few in the heart of the tempest to whom it was given to record precisely, faithfully, in burning words which must endure, the terrors that they saw.

Before the war, Barbusse had been practically an unknown writer. His two volumes of poems, *Pleureuses* (1895) and *Les Suppliants* (1900), a collection of short stories, *Nous Autres* (1914), and an earlier novel, *L'Enfer,* had not been widely read.

When the war broke out, though a pacifist, over military age, and in delicate health, he enrolled as a volunteer and demanded to be sent on active service, for he believed that he was engaging in a war to kill war. Readers of *Le Feu* and of his later novel, *Clarté,* will see that he was soon bitterly disillusioned. *Le Feu* is the most powerful indictment of war ever written. Barbusse depicts its hideousness with the intense realism of which only a Latin or a Russian is capable. He relates facts in their naked brutality.

And when he has recourse to metaphor, it is always powerful and convincing: thus he compares a bursting shell to the terrific spitting of a volcano, gathering its saliva in the entrails of the earth (*Le crachement effroyable d'un volcan qui s'amassait dans les entrailles du monde*).

The profound impression created by this masterpiece of war literature encouraged Barbusse to republish his earlier work, *L'Enfer.* Hell is witnessed by a young boarder in a Parisian

boarding-house, who finds a chink in the wall of his room through which he can look into the adjoining chamber. The book is the most audacious and the most gruesome of the century. Its earnestness and its freedom from prejudice drew high praise from Anatole France, who wrote, "here at length is the book of a man," and from Maurice Maeterlinck, who saw in those pages a work of genius. *L'Enfer* does, indeed, contain many a powerful passage of deep insight and profound import. But regarded as a whole, it is too ghoulish, and it stresses far too strongly the sexual side of life.

In *Clarté,* which appeared about the time of the Armistice, Barbusse interweaves with a slight thread of plot the development of those pacifist theories in which the war had confirmed him. The title of the book gave its name to a pacifist society, of which its author was the leading spirit.

Georges Duhamel

Though originally a man of science and a doctor of medicine by profession, Georges Duhamel was beginning to be known as a man of letters before the war. He had published two volumes of poems, *Élégies* and *Compagnons,* two plays produced at the Odéon, *La Lumière* and *Dans l'Ombre des Statuts,* and one at le Théâtre des Arts, *Le Combat.*

But the two greatest of his war books, *Vie des Martyrs* (1914-16) and *Civilisation* (1914-17), were the works that won him prominence. Like Barbusse, Duhamel possesses the art of describing what he sees; but he sees it from a different angle. He has more sense of balance and proportion. His descriptions, though equally realistic, are less lurid. Barbusse, apostle and social reformer, is confident that mankind will be regenerated by conversion to a certain creed, that of pacifism. Duhamel, poet, dreamer, philosopher, man of science, sceptic, has little faith in mankind's regeneration, at least in this æon of time.

§ 11

Marcel Proust

One of the most important events in the history of contemporary French fiction has been the appearance of the remarkable series of novels by Marcel Proust entitled *A la Recherché du Temps Perdu.* The first of them, *Du Côté de chez Swann,* appeared in 1914, when its author was forty-two. Immediately the reading public was divided into two hostile camps: Proustians and anti-Proustians. The former were most numerous abroad, in this country and in Holland. But even here not everyone could admire the long subtle sentences and the interminable descriptions—six pages to analyse a woman's smile. We once heard a gifted young English novelist exclaim to a friend: "What, you have been reading Proust! How priggish of you!" But perhaps in this case it is better to be priggish than prejudiced; for Proust is worth reading if only you have the patience. And many of his pages require no patience at all; for he could, when he chose, give the essence of a human emotion in three lines; and in strong, clear, indelible strokes, he could draw the narrow bourgeois life as it is lived in a small French provincial town. Proust lived to see the publication of three more volumes of *A la Recherché du Temps Perdu: A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleur, Le Côté de Guermantes,* and the first part of *Sodome et Gomorrhe.* These books show a man who, in middle age, recovers the sensations of his childhood and his youth, reviving with them the memory of the places and the people where and with whom those early years were passed. When Proust died in November, 1922, he left ready for publication four volumes to complete the series, including the two final volumes of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and two others, *La Prisonnière* and *Albertine Disparue,* also the whole of a new series entitled *Temps Retrouvé.*

What will be the verdict of posterity on this voluminous

work, more obscure than Meredith's, but no less delicate and distinguished, is one of the literary enigmas of the future.

Maeterlinck

With the poet Émile Verhaeren, who, Belgian patriot though he was, enjoyed a far greater popularity in Germany before the war than in his own country, Maurice Maeterlinck stands for modern Belgian literature. Maeterlinck has a world-wide popularity, greater perhaps than that of any other living writer, but he writes in French and his culture is almost entirely French and his work may therefore be fairly considered with that of the modern writers of France. Maeterlinck was born in 1862. His first book, a volume of lyrics called *Serres Chaudes*, was published in 1889. The poems, which show the influence of Verlaine and Poe, have been translated into English verse by Mr. Bernard Miall. The following called *Prayer* is characteristic:

A Woman's fears my heart control:
  What have I done with these, my part,
My hands, the lilies of my soul,
  Mine eyes, the heavens of my heart?

O Lord, have pity on my grief:
  I have lost the palm and ring, alas!
Pity my prayers, my poor relief,
  Cut flowers and fragile in a glass,

Pity the trespass of my mouth,
  And things undone, and words unsaid;
Shed lilies on my fever's drouth,
  And roses on the marshes shed!

O God! The doves whose flights are gold
  On heavens remembered! Pity too
These garments that my loins enfold,
  That rustle round me, dimly blue!

Maeterlinck has written plays of which *Pelleas and Melisande*, *The Blue Bird*, and the very beautiful *Mary Magdalene* are the best known. He is the author of a delightful *Life of the Bee* (he is himself an enthusiastic bee-keeper) and of volumes of essays called *The Treasure of the Humble*, *Wisdom and Destiny*, and *Death*. In his plays Maeterlinck is a symbolist. His philosophy, expounded both in his plays and his essays, is the mysticism derived at least in part from Swedenborg. *The Blue Bird*, for instance, stands for truth, without which happiness is impossible, and it is interesting to remember that Swedenborg said that the birds of the heavens signify truth. The quest for happiness is always vain to those who cannot find it in their own souls. Tyltyl and Mytyl only discovered the secret after returning from their long search to find their pet bird was blue. "We went so far and it was here all the time." Maeterlinck's mysticism is always moral. To quote Miss Una Taylor, he is concerned with "the search for God in nature by a path of humility and love; the search for God in man under whose beggar rags Maeterlinck describes the gleaming of the divine raiment."

§ 12

MODERN GERMAN WRITERS

Heinrich Heine

With the death of Goethe a great era in German literature came to an end. Carlyle regarded the school of romantic writers, of whom Johann Ludwig Tieck, novelist, dramatist, and essayist, Novalis, the pen-name of Friedrich von Hardenberg, a poet, and Jean Paul Richter, the novelist who had been compared to Sterne are the most conspicuous, as Goethe's successors. But it was on Heinrich Heine, by far the most important German poet of the nineteenth century, that, as Matthew Arnold has said, "incomparably the largest portion of Goethe's mantle fell." Heine was a Jew, born at Düsseldorf in 1797. His childhood

was passed in the years of Napoleon's greatest glory, and throughout his life, like many of his German contemporaries, he held the Emperor in the highest veneration, in his case mainly because he had freed the Jews from many of their political disabilities. After an unsuccessful attempt at business success, Heine became a student of the University of Bonn. As a young man he was vastly affected by the teaching of the philosopher Hegel. His first poems were published in 1821. In these early years, Heine's life was made comparatively easy by the generosity of his uncle, to whom he owed long holidays where he learned the love for the sea, which he felt more acutely and expressed more completely than any other German poet.

In 1827 Heine paid a visit to England, which he cordially detested. "I might settle in England," he once said, "if it were not that I should find there two things, coal-smoke and Englishmen: I cannot abide either." He hated "British narrowness." He met Cobbett, whom he called "a chained cur, who falls with equal fury on everyone whom he does not know, often bites the best friend of the house in his calves, barks incessantly, and just because of this incessantness of his barking cannot get listened to, even when he barks at a real thief."

Heine had become closely associated with the Young German Party, who were eager to establish liberalism in the German States. After the fall of Napoleon, reaction had rioted throughout Europe and nowhere more than in Germany, and it was the aim of the Young German Party to restore the principles of the Revolution of 1789. To this end Heine had written his famous *Reisebilder*. But in 1830 the poet confessed that he had little hope for Germany or the German people. "What demon drove me," he said, "to write my Reisebilder, to edit a newspaper, to plague myself with our time and its interests, to try and shake the poor German Hodge out of his thousand years' sleep in his hole? What good did I get by it? Hodge opened his eyes, only to shut them again immediately; he yawned, only

to begin snoring again the next minute louder than ever; he stretched his stiff ungainly limbs, only to sink down again directly afterwards and lie like a dead man in the old bed of his accustomed habits. I must have rest; but where am I to find a resting-place? In Germany I can no longer stay."

In 1831 Heine made his home in Paris. "The French," he said, "are the chosen people of the new religion, its first gospels and dogmas have been drawn up in their language; Paris is the new Jerusalem, and the Rhine is the Jordan which divides the consecrated land of freedom from the land of the Philistines." In 1834 Heine met Eugénie Mirat, a saleswoman in a boot shop, whom he married some years after. She was entirely uneducated and rather stupid, and his relations with her appear to have been very similar to Rousseau's relation with his kitchen wench. But Eugénie was good-natured, and the poet seems to have been comparatively happy with her. This connection with a Frenchwoman weakened his ties with his native country, which he only visited twice after he had settled in Paris. It should be mentioned that Heine had professed conversion to Christianity some years before. In Paris he acted as the correspondent of German newspapers and wrote his famous *Atta Troll*, which the poet called the "swan-song of the Romantics," and in which he satirised the political verse of his time.

In 1848, the year of the revolution, Heine was struck down by a paralytic stroke and for eight years he lay helpless on his bed. He endured this living death with gay courage, carefully reading all the medical books that he could find which dealt with his malady. "What good this reading is to do me, I don't know," he said, "except that it will qualify me to give lectures in heaven on the ignorance of doctors on earth about diseases of the spinal marrow." During his years of pain Heine's genius indeed grew clearer, finer, and more spiritual. His *Romanzero* (1851), his *Neueste Gedichte* (1853), and the last work of all, the poems inspired by his ethereal passion for Camille Selden,

have far more sincerity than his earlier writing. Heine died in 1856 and was buried at Montmartre.

Romanzero contains many poems which tell of the poet's dignified disillusionment. For example, the following translated by Margaret Armour:

For thirty years, in Freedom's struggle glorious,
I've taken part in many a hope forlorn.
I knew that I could never be victorious,
But wounded must return, and battle-worn.

I waked by day and night—there was no sleeping
For me, as for the others in the tent
(Their snores, good lads, did something towards keeping
Slumber away, maybe, when I was spent).

I have known terror in those watches weary
(For only fools have never been afraid),
Then I would whistle mocking tunes and cheery,
Until the fear that haunted me was laid.

Yes, I have stood on guard, alert and steady,
And, if a doubtful character was seen,
Have aimed, and the hot bullet that was ready
Has found in his vile paunch a billet mean.

Yet all the same, one cannot but confess it,
Such scurvy fellows often understood
The art of shooting—vain 'twere to suppress it.
My wounds are gaping—ebbing is my blood.

Wide gape the wounds—the vacant post's bespoken!
One falls, another fills his place and part.
But I have fallen unvanquished—sword unbroken—
The only thing that's broken is my heart.

§ 13

Friedrich Nietzsche

The outstanding figure in German literature in the last half of the nineteenth century is Friedrich Nietzsche, who was

born in 1844. He was appointed to a professorial Chair in Basle University in 1869, but was compelled to resign, owing to continued ill-health, in 1879. Ten years later he became insane and he died at Weimar in 1900. He was, as Professor Robertson says, "a thinker in aphorisms and an artist in the handling of words." It is with the artist that we are here concerned, but his philosophy must be briefly summarised. He began as the disciple of Schopenhauer and the friend of Wagner, but he abandoned Schopenhauer's philosophy and quarrelled with Wagner, rejecting pessimistic resignation to things as they are to enunciate a truculent gospel for fundamentally changing society. He protests that men must choose between subjection to an ignorant short-sighted mob and subordination to the strong man, the superman—wise, resourceful, ruthless, who will rule his fellows for their own good. To him strength was the supreme virtue, weakness the supreme vice.

Nietzsche's most famous work is *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* in which Oriental guise he summarises his teaching and elaborates the doctrine of the superman. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is without question the greatest book produced in Germany for half a century, even if it be regarded merely as a work of literary art. Here are some of the characteristic aphorisms:

> Man is a rope slung between animal and superman.
>
> What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer inclined to call Lord and God? "Thou Shalt" is the great dragon called. But the spirit of the lion saith, "I will."
>
> Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long.
>
> Ye say it is the good cause which halloweth even war? I say unto you: it is the good war which halloweth every cause.
>
> Man shall be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior: all else is folly.
>
> Thou goest to woman? Don't forget thy whip!

That to the stronger the weaker shall serve—thereto persuadeth he whose will would be master over a still weaker one. That delight alone he is unwilling to forego.

The earth hath a skin; and this skin hath diseases. One of these diseases is called man.

He who cannot command himself shall obey.

Everything goeth, everything returneth; eternally rolleth the wheel of existence. Everything dieth, everything blossometh forth again; eternally runneth on the year of existence.

In later years the literary genius of Germany has found its most interesting expression in drama.

§ 14

RUSSIAN WRITERS

N. V. Gogol

The earliest of the great Russian imaginative writers is N. V. Gogol (1809-52). He was born at Poltava, and educated at the Niezhin gymnasium, where he started a manuscript periodical, *The Star.* Thence he went in 1829 to St. Petersburg, where he tried the stage, but failed. Then he became a clerk in a Government department. But it was in literature that he found his true vocation. In 1829 he published an idyll, *Hans Kuchel Garten,* which was so ridiculed that he bought up all the copies available, and burnt them in an inn-room which he hired for the purpose. But, personally encouraged by Pushkin, an earlier writer who afterwards influenced Tolstoy, he wrote *Evenings in a Farmhouse at Dikanka,* a story told by an old bee-keeper and full of folk-tales, legends, traditions, and descriptions of the charming life of Little Russia. Gogol's keen fantastic humour is one of his great merits. These books were followed by *Stories of Mirgorod* and *Taras Bulba.* The latter is a prose epic: a tale of an old Cossack chief and his two sons, and of warfare between the Cossacks and the Poles. Later on,

Gogol became a realist and a pioneer of realism in Russian literature. *The Overcoat* is the pitiful story of a poor clerk, who after much difficulty obtains a winter overcoat, which is at once stolen from him, plunging him into dejection from which he dies. This kind of realism became a root of Russian fiction. Sympathetic portrayal of the despised and rejected, and kindly sympathy for comic, pathetic, and grotesque people, has ever since been a main theme of Russian novels.

Gogol's greatest novel is *Dead Souls.* The hero is a thorough rascal, who avails himself of some legal peculiarities of serfdom to devise an ingenious method of borrowing money on fictitious security. In the course of his peregrinations in pursuit of his plan he meets all sorts of typically queer serf-owners, who supply ample material for Gogol's vigorous humour.

Ivan Turgenev

Ivan Turgenev (1818-83) was the first Russian writer to reach maturity and attain European celebrity. No Russian writer is more artistic, or such a consummate master of literary form. His first important work, *The Sportsman's Sketches,* 1852, was not only beautifully written, containing wonderful descriptions of scenery, but by its life-like presentation of Russian serfs it assisted the emancipation movement. This secured its author the enthusiastic appreciation of progressive Russian society. It was followed by *Rudin, A House of Gentlefolk, On the Eve, Fathers and Sons, Virgin Soil,* and *Clara Milich.* These supply a series of studies of the various movements of thought and feeling in Russia during the thirty years of Turgenev's literary activity. *Fathers and Sons* brought the word "Nihilist" into general use. Here is the passage in which it occurs:

> "Well, and what is Mr. Bazarov himself?" asked Paul Petrovich deliberately.

"What is Bazarov?" replied Arkadi, with a chuckle. "If you like, uncle, I will tell you just what he is."

"Be so kind, nephew."

"He is a Nihilist."

"What?" asked Nicholas Petrovich, and Paul Petrovich raised his knife in the air with a bit of butter on its point, and remained motionless.

"He is a Nihilist," repeated Arkadi.

"Nihilist!" uttered Nicholas Petrovich. "That is from the Latin word 'nihil,' nothing, as far as I can judge. Therefore the word implies a man who . . . who acknowledges nothing."

"Say rather, who respects nothing," put in Paul Petrovich, and again began buttering his bread.

"Who deals with everything from a critical point of view," remarked Arkadi.

"And isn't that all the same?" asked Paul Petrovich.

"No, it is not all the same. A Nihilist is a man who doesn't bow before any authority, who doesn't accept any principle on trust, no matter with what respect that principle may be generally regarded."

"Well, and is that good?" interrupted Paul Petrovich.

"That depends on opinion, uncle; to one man it is good, to another it is bad." . . .

"There used to be Hegelists, and now there are Nihilists. We will see how you will exist in vacuum, in an airless space."

Turgenev had a wonderful mastery of the beautiful Russian language, as is particularly well shown in his last work, *Poems in Prose.* Some of his shorter stories are among his best, such as *The Torrents of Spring,* one of the world's great masterpieces in the art of fiction. Turgenev lived for many years in Paris, where he was the friend of Zola, Flaubert, and Daudet.

F. M. Dostoevski

F. M. Dostoevski (1822-81) was an extraordinary genius whose life was so crowded with misfortunes that it is a marvel

his powers ever developed. His sympathy for the oppressed and despised is wonderful, and his power of penetration into the inmost recesses of human minds—especially diseased and unbalanced minds—is so uncanny that though much of his work was done at high pressure for daily bread, and he cannot in some of his books be relied on to get safely to his journey's end. portions of his writings are equal to anything ever written, and there are critics of high repute who would place him first among the Russian novelists.

He was always extremely poor, was epileptic, was condemned to death for attending some small Socialist gatherings, and actually endured four years' penal servitude in Siberia. After returning home he escaped abroad to avoid imprisonment for debt, and was bitterly attacked, by Radicals for his distrust of the Socialist leaders, and by Conservatives for advocacy of the cause of the oppressed. His chief works were: *Poor Folk, Notes from a Dead House* (the outcome of his Siberian experiences), *The Oppressed and Aggrieved. Crime and Punishment* (a most remarkable work, said to have had a great influence on Nietzsche), *The Possessed,* and the unfinished *Brothers Karamazov.*

Crime and Punishment is perhaps the greatest realistic novel in all literature.

§ 15

Count Leo Tolstoy

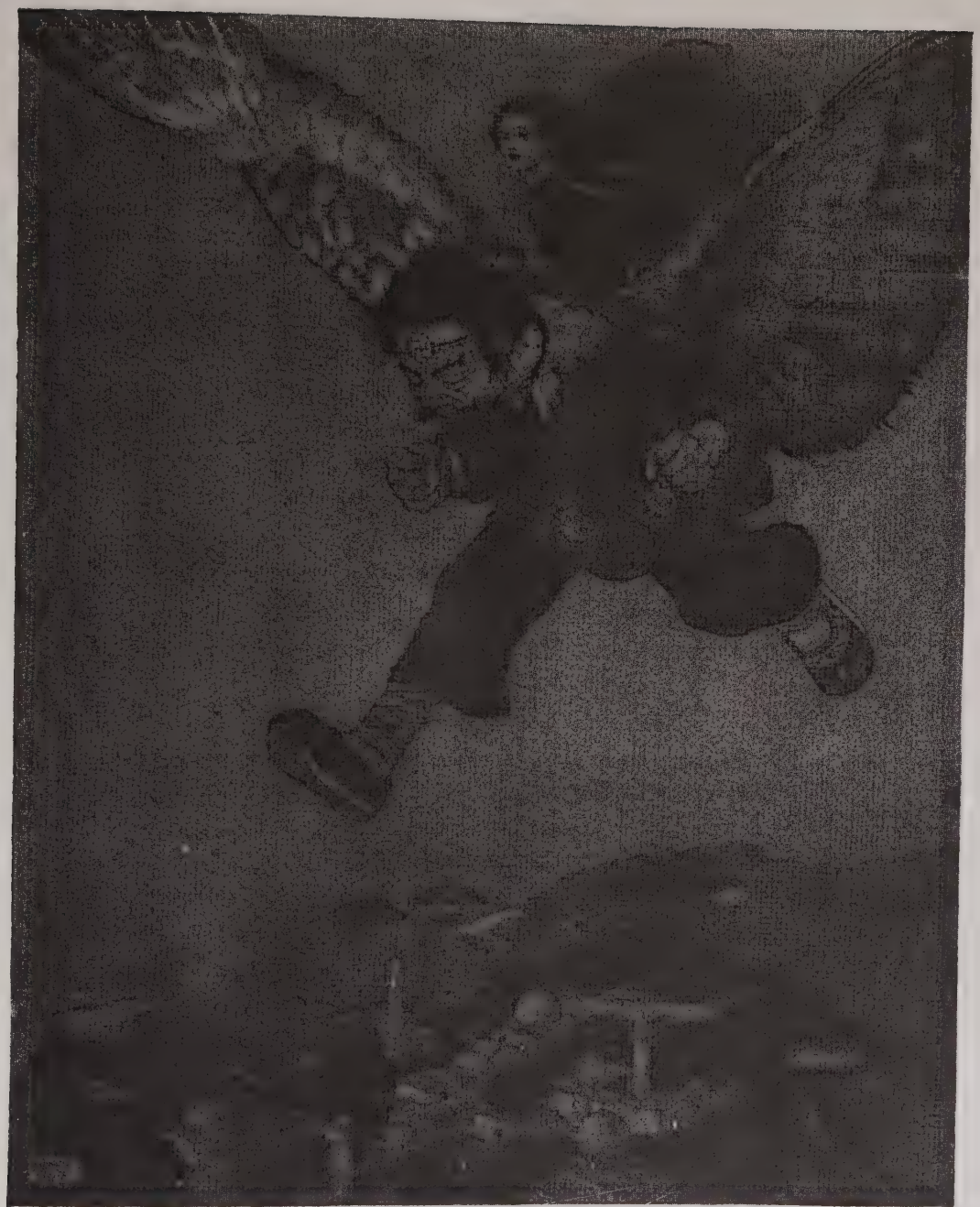
Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the greatest name in Russian literature, was born on the family estate at Yasnaya Poliana and educated at Kazan University. He fought in the Crimean War and was present at the storming of Sebastopol. He then retired from the army, and after travelling in Germany and Italy he married and settled down on his estates, where he wrote the long succession of books which have made his name world-famous. But about 1880 he resolved to hand over his property

to his wife and family and to live like a peasant of the soil. Besides novels, he wrote first-rate essays and works of a philosophic, religious, and social character, which had world-wide circulation and influence, as well as a series of plays, which rank among the best of Russian dramatic work; so that, when his whole achievement is taken into account, he stands quite unrivalled.

His greatest novel perhaps is *War and Peace,* a very long work presenting the lives of two Russian families during a period of more than a dozen years, and including the Napoleonic invasion. It is a marvellous production—a landmark no one can afford to miss who wishes to understand Russia or its literature. As Maurice Baring has said: "For the first time in an historical novel, instead of saying: 'This is very likely true' or 'What a wonderful work of historical reconstruction!' we feel that we were ourselves there, that we knew those people; that they are a part of our very own past."

Anna Karenina was a similarly great achievement, dealing with the Russia of 1876, and contrasting St. Petersburg life with life in the country. Its concluding chapters gave the first indication of Tolstoy's coming absorption in religious and reformist activities. His last great novel, completed when he was over seventy, was *Resurrection*—confessedly a propagandist work designed to convey his feelings about the problems of life.

Another of his chief artistic productions is a short novel *The Kreutzer Sonata,* of which it will be convenient to speak later. Among his other short novels are: *Boyhood, Childhood, and Youth, The Two Hussars, Family Happiness, The Cossacks* (the fruit of his residence in the Caucasus as a cadet), *Polikuska, The Death of Ivan Ilych, Holstomer: the Story of a Horse, Master and Man,* and the posthumous *Hadji Murad* (which again deals with life in the Caucasus). Mention must also be made of the remarkable sketches of *Sevastopol,* which were the outcome of his experience as an artillery officer during the siege of 1855-6, and which have appealed to men who fought



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"THE GARDEN OF PARADISE"

FROM THE COLOUR ILLUSTRATION BY EDMUND DULAC

So long as children continue to read or listen to Hans Andersen's fairy tales, so long will the figure of Dulac's fair story-teller

The above Colour Illustration to Edmund Dulac's beautiful edition of Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* (by the Kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton) is entitled "The Dew Wife" [illegible] afterwards was named "The Garden of Paradise" [illegible]

in France in the Great War as extraordinarily like their own experience. His wonderful little stories, collected in *Twenty-three Tales*,[1] are in their own way unparalleled. If the true criterion of art be, as Tolstoy declares in *What is Art?* "brevity, simplicity, and sincerity," these short stories are as near perfection as anything in modern literature. They delight children making their first acquaintance with literature at the same time that they secure the admiration of great writers and critics.

In Tolstoy's remarkable work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, written in 1889, he reverted to the idea of celibacy and chastity that is advocated by certain portions of the Christian world, the monastic orders, and some Oriental religions. The vigorous pronouncement of these views in an outspoken modern novel took the public so much by surprise that discussion and denunciation —not the less strenuous because the book was attractively written and of high artistic quality—was general and long-continued both in Russia and elsewhere.

A. P. Chekhov

A. P. Chekhov (1860-1904), whose father had been a serf, was born at Taganrog, and studied medicine at Moscow. He wrote no long novels. As a short-story writer dealing with the *intelligentsia* he has no equal in Russian literature. He was also the author of six one-act farces and five serious plays. His pieces when produced at the admirable Art Theatre in Moscow had great success. The originality of his work lay in his discovery that action is not necessary to ensure interest. It was thought that the lack of action in the plays would prevent their success on the stage, but it was found that they were fully as interesting as plays with a more dramatic plot. His chief pieces are *The Sea Gull, The Cherry Garden, Ivanov, Three Sisters*,

[1] *Twenty-three Tales* is not the name of any one work by Tolstoy, but of a collection of the best of his short stories in the World's Classics series of the Oxford University Press.

and *Uncle Vanya.* He is certainly one of Russia's foremost dramatists, and has had a larger measure of success outside his own country than the exceptionally Russian nature of his theme would have led one to anticipate.

Maxim Gorki, born in 1868, is the most prominent figure in Russian literature of the last twenty years. The son of an artisan or petty trader, his mother a peasant-woman, he was orphaned at an early age. At twelve he ran away from home and got employment on a Volga river-steamer. After working as a baker, a street porter, and an itinerant apple-seller, he obtained a job as clerk at a lawyer's. In 1891 he wandered among tramps in South Russia, and in 1892 began writing short stories for a provincial newspaper. The remarkable quality of these stories, and his amazing rise from the lower depths, quickly secured for him a great reputation both in Russia and in the Western world.

Malva Chelkask, Twenty-six Men and a Girl, and other stories, rapidly became popular. His adulation of the "rebel" —the type that most appealed to him among the tramps he knew —found an echo in the minds of many readers weary of the dull mediocrity of respectable society and the absence of strong sensations in a monotonous reign of law and order. One of Gorki's heroines, Varenka Olesova, says: "The Russian hero is always silly and stupid. He is always sick of everything; always thinking about something that cannot be understood, and is himself so miserable, so mi-ser-able! He will think, think, then talk; then he will go and make a declaration of love, and after that he thinks and thinks again, and then he marries; he talks all sorts of nonsense to his wife, and then abandons her."

Gorki was not equally successful when he attempted longer novels. Neither *Foma Gordeev,* nor *The Three,* nor *The Orlovs* is as good as his short stories.

With Gorki, a literary era came to an end. He is the last of the great writers sprung from the old Russia. The post-

revolution Russia is producing a literature of its own—tempestuous and perhaps merely the literature of a period of transition.

§ 16

MODERN ITALIAN WRITERS

Giosuè Carducci and Gabriele d'Annunzio

Gabriele d'Annunzio is by far the widest-known name in the literature of modern Italy. His first poems were written in 1880, when he was seventeen, and in them he showed himself the disciple of Carducci, who, although little read outside his own country, has been called the father of modern Italian literature. Carducci's most characteristic work is his *Hymn to Satan,* 1865, a pæan of rebellion against Christianity, which, in the poet's opinion, threatened the greatness of his country. The poem, however, is against tyranny, in the Byronic vein, rather than against any true faith. *Odi Barbare,* 1877, excited much critical discussion in Italy, and may fairly be taken as example of what Carducci stands for in art—a remarkable expression of modern nationalistic ideals in classical even antiquarian forms. He was a greater artist than D'Annunzio, and a greater poet, but his intense nationalism somewhat shuts him off from the understanding of other lands than Italy. His very return to classical forms was an expression of nationalism, as it could not be in a writer of another country,—since those forms belonged peculiarly in the tradition of ancient Rome, and the Grecian art which Rome helped to spread through the world.

D'Annunzio is playwright, poet, and novelist. His poetry is weighted with trope and archaism, so erudite that it escapes pedantry only by its author's amazing vigour, and is hardly intelligible to foreigners. Greek, Latin, old Italian, mediæval French, and English influences have swayed him turn by turn, without ever subduing his essential quality. A hatred of middle-class convention, a thirst for Nature in her brutality as well

as in her beauty, a Nietzschean will to domination and imperialism, above all a craving for every kind of exoticism, are the qualities of an artist who believes himself a man of action, and turns to art for that realisation of his dreams denied him by the society in which he lives.

Many of his novels—*Fire, The Triumph of Death, Giovanni Episcopo*—are known to English readers. Several of his plays, admirably translated by Arthur Symons, reveal him as the creator of a new prose, sometimes beautiful, sometimes dull and overloaded. D'Annunzio's feats as an airman and his exploits in the Fiume episode are well known.

Giovanni Papini

Giovanni Papini, critic and novelist, after many spiritual experiences, now stands for his faith. The pre-War attempt in *The Memoirs of God* to view the cosmos from the point of view of its Creator, has resolved itself into a *Life of Christ,* the humble expression of a new-found Christianity, written for the benefit of a post-War society, since "in no time of which there is record has meanness been so mean, nor the drought so parching—our Earth is Hell illuminated by the condescension of the Sun."

The Story of Christ is a retelling of the Bible story with many comments. In a beautiful passage Papini emphasises the fact that Jesus was born and lived among the poor:

> Those hands that were raised in blessing above the simple-hearted, that healed the leper, that shed light upon the eyes of the blind, that raised the dead, those hands that were pierced with nails upon the cross, were hands that had been bathed in the sweat of hard and strained labour, whereon rough toil had set its horny mark. They were hands that had held tools, had driven home the nail—the hands of a workman. Jesus laboured with matter before He toiled with souls.

The end of the great drama is told with reverence and the intense sense of drama that characterises the whole book. The incidental pictures of Jesus are generally fine and suggestive.

In his essays *Four and Twenty Minds* Papini shows that he has not the smallest respect for traditional judgments and traditional idolatries. Hamlet to him is merely "a fat neurasthenic, half evil and half imbecile," and Herbert Spencer, the philosopher, was nothing but "the pedantic Hamlet of a half intelligent and compromising bourgeoisie." For Nietzsche, Papini has intense admiration. "I declare to you that I do not know of another modern life nobler, purer, sadder, lonelier, more hopeless than that of Frederick Nietzsche."

Without attempting any excursion into the domains of philosophy or criticism, reference must be made to Benedetto Croce. Signor Croce's range is vast and his position is European. It is enough to say that his *Theory of Æsthetic* has revolutionised the critical thought of contemporary Europe.

§ 17

SCANDINAVIAN WRITERS

Europe is more grateful to Scandinavia for Hans Andersen than for any other gift.

Hans Andersen

Hans Andersen was born on one of the Danish islands in 1805, the only child of a poor cobbler, who, however, seems to have longed for education, and to have done his best for his son; he used to read him *The Arabian Nights*. Andersen lived in his own life the story so beloved of all fabulists, of the under-dog, sickly, derided, and scorned, who rose to such fame that on his seventieth birthday he was presented with a book containing one of his stories in fifteen languages. He was a dreamy, superstitious child, but far more observant than anyone guessed. To

his excited imagination, there was nothing dead in all the world; everything talked and had its personality. So that in his stories flowers had human life, and a shadow, and a darning-needle, a shilling, the moon, a fir-tree, a duckling, and the old street lamp.

Hans lost his father in the Napoleonic Wars, and his mother soon married again. As the boy apparently loved playing with his little model theatre, and dressing dolls for it, they apprenticed him to a tailor, and then put him into a cloth factory. He ran away from here, and when he was fourteen, though he was still full of great ideas for his future, he could scarcely write. He begged his mother to let him try his fortunes in Copenhagen; and because of the words of a soothsayer, she consented. "Your son will become a great man," had said the old woman, "and in honour of him Odense will one day be illuminated."

Arrived in the capital, Hans made fierce attempts to make his way on the stage, but he was everywhere taken for a lunatic. But first Siboni, the director of the Academy of Music, and then Guldburg, the poet, befriended him, and gave him shelter and education. The shy, emotional, ungainly boy began to be recognised as a poet; his rebuffs were by no means over, but they lessened. Critics were, on the whole, unfavourable; but in 1833 a travelling pension from the King brought him a little peace. He published many poems, sketches of travel, two or three novels and romantic dramas, and, in 1840, his *Picture Book Without Pictures*. He visited England, Italy, and the East. In 1844 a visit to the Court of Denmark was productive of an annuity. *Tales for Children* and *The Wild Swans and the Ice Maiden* were published in 1861 and 1863. He was greatly honoured by his countrymen, and awarded the Grand Cross of the Dannebrog Order—these incidents are pleasant to relate, for the sake of their contrast with the obscure, unhappy childhood of this Danish Hop-o'-my-Thumb.

The fairy-tales of Andersen are rich and intimate with his own fantastic personality. Very few of them are collected from

older sources, though the fable of the "Ugly Duckling who Became a Swan" is the Cinderella idea enacted by farmyard inhabitants; "The Flying Trunk" and "The Travelling Companion" hail from the East, like Perrault's "Bluebeard"; Little Klaus is, probably unconsciously, the wily Reynard and Puss-in-Boots once more, using most reprehensible craft in his battle against his dull-witted oppressor, Big Klaus.

It is hard to single out for special mention any of Andersen's stories, for in one volume we find a wonderful diversity of mood and invention. He can be forlorn, grotesque, whimsical, scared, gay, horrible, or ineffably tender. He treats of common things, but never in a common way. In his elfin hands, tin soldiers, goloshes, tinder-boxes, a pair of red shoes, or a night-watchman become as fascinating as all the fabled wonders of Arabia or Cathay.

The most interesting personality in modern Danish literature is Georg Brandes, the great critic who has written brilliantly of Shakespeare, and is perhaps the most distinguished European critic of letters of the past half-century.

To Scandinavia belongs the Norwegian Ibsen and the Swedish August Strindberg, two dramatists of worldwide reputation whose work is considered elsewhere. Of Norwegian novelists Bjornson, the contemporary of Ibsen, is most known. In his novel *In God's Way* he discusses with power and insight the twin problems of heredity and education. Bjornson's vogue has since been matched by Knut Hamsun, the author of the widely read and discussed *Hunger*, *Pan*, and *The Growth of the Soil*.

§ 18

SPANISH WRITERS

Less centralised than England, Spain has produced a crop of "regional" novelists, whose inspiration, drawn from local life and custom rather than from European, is nevertheless of great interest.

We in England have our representative of this tendency, of whom the greatest is Thomas Hardy, but whereas here they are the exception they are almost the rule in Spain, since nearly every novelist of distinction from 1870 to 1900 began his career by writing "regionally."

There is also romanticism. Like Charles II it has "been an unconscionable time dying"; indeed, it survives, embalmed in the plays of Echegaray, modified in Galdos, and half-conscious in many contemporaries who fight without ever completely conquering its influence.

Vicente Blasco Ibanez

Vicente Blasco Ibañez is without question the most widely read of living Spanish writers. He was born in 1867 and was for a time an extreme Radical journalist. For his political writings he was tried by court-martial, imprisoned, and released on parole. He lived for some time in the Argentine, and it was there that he began his serious literary work. Of his many novels only one, *La Maja Destenda,* is drama of individual psychology. In the others, Ibañez has painted broadly on a large canvas the industrial conditions governing the lives of the Spanish people. One of these novels, *La Horda,* is a sombre picture of the slums of Madrid, its gipsies, its smugglers, and its unemployed workmen. *The Cathedral,* set in the mediæval city of Toledo, has for its theme the struggle between Bolshevism and Clericalism, and *Arroz y Tartana* is a Spanish study of "clogs to clogs."

The War novels *Mare Nostrum* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* have been widely read and translated. They both have the qualities of exuberance, brilliant colour, and fine dramatic effect. These are also the qualities of *Blood and Sand,* a brilliant study of the life of a Spanish bull-fighter. Ibañez makes no attempt to minimise the disgusting horrors of the bull ring. The death of Gallardo, the matador, is an example of the novelist's power of description:

He placed himself opposite the animal, who seemed waiting for him, steady on its legs. He thought it useless to make any more passes with the muleta. So he placed himself "in profile" with the red cloth hanging on the ground, and the rapier horizontal at the height of his eye. Now to thrust in his arm!

With a sudden impulse the audience rose to their feet; for a few seconds the man and the bull formed one single mass, and so moved on some steps. The connoisseurs were already waving their hands anxious to applaud. He had thrown himself in to kill as in his best day. That was a "true" estocade!

But suddenly the man was thrown out from between the horns by a crushing blow, and rolled on the sand. The bull lowered his head, picking up the inert body, lifting it for an instant on his horns to let it fall again, then rushing on his mad career with the rapier plunged up to the hilt in his neck.

Gallardo rose slowly; the whole Plaza burst out into uproarious, deafening applause, anxious to repair their injustice. *Olé* for the man! Well done the lad from Seville! He had been splendid!

But the torero did not acknowledge these outbursts of enthusiasm. He raised his hand to his stomach, crouching in a painful curve, and with his head bent began to walk forward with uncertain step. Twice he raised his head as if he were looking for the door of exit and fearing not to be able to find it, finally staggering like a drunken man, and falling flat on the sand. . . .

The matador was carried into the infirmary to die.

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XXXVI

SOME LATER VICTORIANS

SOME LATER VICTORIANS

§ 1

George Meredith

GEORGE MEREDITH was born in the High Street, Portsmouth, on February 12, 1828. His father, who was of Welsh descent, was a tailor. Although in politics Meredith was an extreme Radical, as a literary artist he was concerned with the gentle and the well-bred, and there is no question that he was ashamed of his tailor father, who was the original of "the Great Mell" in his *Evan Harrington,* much in the same way as Dickens's father was the original of Micawber. Meredith's mother was an Irish lady who died when he was five. He was educated at the Moravian school at Neuwied on the Rhine, where he remained until he was nearly sixteen. After his return to England he studied in a desultory way for the law, and when he was twenty-one he married one of the daughters of Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist.

Little is known of the life of George Meredith in the five years that followed. His first published poem appeared in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* in the year of his marriage, and his first book, *Poems,* was published in 1851. He apparently wrote very little and could hardly have supported himself and his family with his pen. In 1856 he published *The Shaving of Shagpat,* and in the same year he began to write regularly for the *Ipswich Journal* and the *Morning Post.* George Eliot reviewed *The Shaving of Shagpat* and described it as "a work of

genius precious as an apple-tree among the trees of the world." The author himself described the book as *An Arabian Entertainment.*

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel

Farina, aptly described as "a full-blooded specimen of the nonsense of genius," a contrast between asceticism and the realisation of the joy of life, was published in 1857, to be followed two years later by the great novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.* This story of a father and a son, a father who himself the slave of "a system" contrived misery for his son by his blind devotion to theory, is a poignant ironic tragedy, dignified with many passages of extraordinary beauty. Meredith had an acute appreciation of the connection between human thrills and sorrows and the world that supplies the scene for the human drama.

Robert Louis Stevenson said that the parting scene between Richard and Lucy was the strongest written since Shakespeare. Richard was leaving his wife and baby to fight a duel, and she was begging him to remain:

> He was almost vanquished by the loveliness of her womanhood. She drew his hand to her heart, and strained it there under one breast. "Come: lie on my heart," she murmured with a smile of holy sweetness.
>
> He wavered more, and drooped to her, but summoning the powers of hell, kissed her suddenly, cried the words of parting, and hurried to the door. It was over in an instant. She cried out his name, clinging to him wildly, and was adjured to be brave, for he would be dishonoured if he did not go. Then she was shaken off.

The story ends in tragedy. Lucy dies and Richard is heartbroken. "Have you noticed the expression in the eyes of blind men? That is just how Richard looks, as he lies there silent in his bed—striving to image her on his brain."

Evan Harrington was published serially in 1860. In a sense it is autobiographical, the story of a tailor's son, brought up as a gentleman, bound to a business he hates, by his father's debts. The tailor, "the Great Mell," is dead when the story begins, but his personality dominates the whole book. "He was a tailor and he kept horses; he was a tailor and he had gallant adventures; he was a tailor and he shook hands with his customers. Finally, he was a tradesman and he was never known to have sent in a bill."

Meredith's second book of poems, *Modern Love,* was published in 1862. It was severely criticised in the *Spectator,* and the criticism brought a remarkable letter of protest from Swinburne, in which he said: "Mr. Meredith is one of the three or four poets now alive whose work, perfect or imperfect, is always as noble in design as it is often faultless in result."

The first Mrs. Meredith died in 1860. The marriage was not a success, but his second marriage with a lady of French descent brought him twenty years of unclouded happiness. Soon after his second marriage he went to live at Flint Cottage, Box Hill, which remained his home until his death.

Sandra Belloni was published in 1864. It is little more than the introduction to *Vittoria,* the second novel with an Italian scene which appeared three years later, but it contains many examples of Meredithian wisdom such as the description of true passion as "noble strength on fire." In 1866 Meredith acted as special correspondent of the *Morning Post* with the Italian army during the war between Prussia and Austria, in which the Italians finally recovered Venice from the Hapsburgs. This experience gave him a close acquaintance with the Italian scenes described in *Vittoria,* a story of the revolution of 1848, in which incidentally the novelist painted a famous word-picture of Mazzini.

In *Vittoria* Meredith insists on the necessity of discipline. The soul must not be allowed to "fly out among the twisting chances"—

Our life is but a little holding, lent
To do a mighty labour: we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent
To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun.

The Egoist

Space forbids the detailed analysis of all Meredith's novels, and it must suffice to record that *Rhoda Fleming,* a story concerned for the most part with persons in humble life, was published in 1865; *Harry Richmond,* with its hero the perfect tragic comedian, in 1870, and *Beauchamp's Career,* the hero of which was suggested by the novelist's friend, Admiral Maxse, in 1874. *The Egoist* was published in 1879. Writing of this supremely great novel, Robert Louis Stevenson said:

> Here is a Nathan for the modern David; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art; we can all be angry with our neighbour; what we want is to be shown, not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind. And *The Egoist* is a satire; so much must be allowed; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote, which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me!" "No, my dear fellow," said the author; "he is all of us." I have read *The Egoist* five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

Shortly before he wrote *The Egoist,* Meredith's *Essay on Comedy* was published in *The New Quarterly Magazine.* In it he acutely analyses satire, irony, and humour, and suggests

that if the comic idea prevailed the world would be cleansed of much of its sin and most of its boredom. It was with the comic idea in his mind that Meredith wrote *The Egoist.* Egoism was to him almost the unforgivable sin, and Sir Willoughby Patterne is the perfect egoist. As she glances at him the Comic Muse perforce "compresses her lips."

In *The Tragic Comedians,* published in 1880, Meredith tells the love-story of Ferdinand Lassalle, the German aristocratic socialist, and Helene von Donniges. Another book of poems, *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth,* was published in 1883. In 1884 the serial publication of *Diana of the Crossways* began in the *Fortnightly Review.* The story is founded on the history of Caroline Norton, one of Sheridan's beautiful granddaughters, whose husband brought an unsuccessful divorce action against her on a charge of misconduct with Lord Melbourne, the Victorian Prime Minister, and who was falsely accused of having betrayed to the *Times* the fact that Robert Peel intended to repeal the Corn Laws. *Diana of the Crossways* remains Meredith's most popular novel, mainly on account of the charm of its heroine. "Like Rosalind," wrote W. E. Henley, "she is pure woman; and like Rosalind (and her sisters) she has in her enough of her spiritual sire to proclaim her birthright and affirm the illustrious kinship."

One of Our Conquerors was published in 1890 and *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* in 1894. The last of the Meredith novels, *The Amazing Marriage,* was published serially in 1895. In 1905 Meredith was appointed by King Edward to the Order of Merit. He died of heart failure on May 18, 1909, at the age of eighty-one.

Meredith outlived the Victorian era and he had no spiritual affinity with it, and it is often forgotten that he was the contemporary of the great Victorian novelists. His first book of poems was published in the same year as *David Copperfield* and *Pendennis. The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* appeared in the

same year as *The Tale of Two Cities, Adam Bede,* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King.* For many years he was little read and his genius was rarely appreciated, and this neglect was unquestionably largely due to the "difficulty" of his style. Henley called him "one of the worst and least attractive of great writers as well as one of the best and most fascinating." Andrew Lang confessed that he erred "in a wilful obscurity, in a too eager search for points and epigrams, in the leaps and bounds of too agile a wit." Again to quote Henley: "He bristles with allusions, he teems with hints and side hits and false alarms, he glitters with phrases, he riots in intellectual points and philosophical fancies." But though it may still require courage and persistence to read Meredith, the result is pleasure and inspiration. Mrs. Carlyle read *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* aloud to her husband, and at the end Carlyle remarked, "This man's no fule." This is a common experience—no fool indeed, but an inspired guide.

As a poet Meredith is most appealing when he sings of nature, and, as Mr. Richard le Gallienne has said, his nature songs are exquisite, "because he has loved and worshipped her as a man his wife." What loveliness there is in such lines as these taken from *The Lark Ascending*—

> He rises and begins to round,
> He drops the silver chain of sound
> Of many links without a break
> In chirrup, whistle, slur, and shake,
> All intervolved and spreading wide,
> Like water-dimples down a tide
> Where ripple ripple overcurls
> And eddy into eddy whirls.

§ 2

Thomas Hardy

The greatest of modern novelists is still alive, and it is a recognisable and, indeed, indubitable fact, that a living author cannot be awarded his niche in the temple of literature by his

living readers. Yet the impulse to make or predict such an award is not easily resisted. In predicting immortality, or a measure of it, for a writer of our own period, we gain something for ourselves. "We share the triumph, and partake the gale." It is certain that many readers and students of Thomas Hardy's novels and poems are prepared to take the risk of their homage. As a novelist and a poet he has brought men something new, original, and strangely old. He has advanced the domain of the novel from the seen joys and sorrows in the world, as we know them, to something deeper: to the ultimate experiences of human life under the stars. It is a strange, but not an inexplicable thing, that Mr. Hardy should be the novelist of Wessex and our own first novelist of the universe.

There is a passage in his great story, *Far from the Madding Crowd,* which we venture to say is entirely peculiar to Hardy and could have appeared in no novel by an earlier writer. Gabriel Oak, a typically fine Dorset shepherd and stoic, born of the soil, with ancient morals and ideals running through his blood, is abroad late at night to tend his flock. The whole story is to be concerned with Wessex farming, farm luck and catastrophes, local events and individual passions, but, above all—with human nature, and with Mr. Hardy's reading of it through a Dorset focus. And thus, when Farmer Oak goes out to his lone shepherd's hut with his flute and his hopes, Mr. Hardy arrests his story with a magnificent expansion of the actual scene. He arches it with all that arches man.

> The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian. A difference of colour in the stars —oftener read of than seen in England—was really perceptible here. The kingly brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye

with a steely glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgeux shone with a fiery red.

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin, the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilised mankind, who are dream-wrapt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.

This is the note which Mr. Hardy has brought into the English novel, and by which he may hereafter be judged the greatest of English novelists. He is the only novelist who has made a tract of English country a *chorus* to a story. This is his triumph in his greatest novel, *The Return of the Native,* but it is also his tendency in all his novels. We refer, of course, to the marvellous and haunting presence of Egdon Heath. The first sentences of *The Return of the Native* are probably the finest opening of an English novel:

A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of enclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

What could be more portentous of human drama played out on this old rolling planet? Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, never struck an organ note quite like this. And this opening is not merely an opening; rather it resembles a musical motive, once heard, often repeated, and therefore never forgotten. In the world of men and things it has its counterpart in the finest ending to an English novel which, one may venture to say, has been written—though by the same hand:

> A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.
>
> Justice was done and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.

Early Years

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840, at Upper Bockhampton, a woodland and secluded hamlet about a mile from the Dorchester which he describes with a unique blend of precision and imagination in *The Mayor of Casterbridge.* His father was a builder, and he was himself designed and indeed went far to be an architect. At the age of seventeen he was articled to a Dorchester architect, Mr. Hicks. Three years later, he came to London and became a pupil of Sir Arthur Blomfield. In 1863 he won the medal of the Institute of British Architects for an essay on "Coloured Brick and Terra-cotta Architecture," and a prize offered by Sir William Tite for architectural design. But in the evolution of circumstances and of his own spirit he quitted architecture for the greater risks of literature. Mr. Hardy's novels and his poems are alike founded on old Wessex, which includes Wiltshire, Hampshire, Somersetshire, and Oxfordshire. It may seem, on a first thought, that a great novelist must needs take the world for his province and not one area of one country. But the novelist's sphere is not the geographical world, it is human nature. The universe,

says Emerson, globes itself in one drop of dew, and it is certain that human nature, which in all its important dimensions is the same everywhere, can be studied within narrow limits. A few villages were enough for Jane Austen; the Lake Country circumscribed without imprisoning Wordsworth; the Yorkshire moorlands enclosed but could not enchain the Brontës; Burns was no traveller. Thomas Hardy has seen the kingdoms of the world, and their glory and futility, from Egdon Heath.

§ 3

The Novels

Mr. Hardy's first novel was entitled *The Poor Man and the Lady;* it never reached print. He launched himself as an author when *Desperate Remedies* appeared in 1871. It attracted more notice from critics than from the public. Next year appeared the most idyllic of all his novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree.* This is the novel which may be recommended as the first to be read. Next year appeared *A Pair of Blue Eyes,* which, though not in the first flight of Mr. Hardy's novels, is an enthralling drama of three lives set in the time when indiscriminate church-restoration was going on all over England. The scene is almost entirely confined to Castle Boterel (Boscastle). The story ends with one of the most curiously conceived tragic incidents in modern fiction—the kind of *dénouement* which only Mr. Hardy could have conceived. The next novel, already referred to and quoted, was *Far from the Madding Crowd.* In it Mr. Hardy rose to the power which found full expression in the five novels, *The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* and *Jude the Obscure.* It was to the severity of certain criticisms passed on the last-named novel that we owe our loss of Hardy the novelist.

The Return of the Native probably excels every other English novel in its use of background. Egdon Heath, is, indeed, more than a background; it broods like a spirit over the

whole story, and its wilds become organic to the unfolding drama. Of the many descriptions of this great wilderness of hill and furze the following is typical:

> The untameable Ishmaelitish study that Egdon now was it had always been. Civilization was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. A person on a heath in raiment of modern cut and colours has more or less an anomalous look. We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive.
>
> To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of it, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New.

Mr. Hardy gives to scenery a self-existence and a spiritual life which is rare indeed. This power of the most intimate, because habitual vision, is found in his grasp of the peasant life of Wessex. He knows his characters from within. To quote the late Mr. Lionel Johnson:

> That poor creature, the "up-country London ink-bottle feller," can do his best to describe rustics: he will hardly, without infinite pains, attain to the interpretation of them. But Mr. Hardy has all the powers required for both description and interpretation of his own country-men: in his books, the rustic folk are perfectly alike. He knows what lies behind the silence of the shrewd, the sullenness of the stupid; the blessings or the blows of fortune, which have

moulded character; the countless details of work, which have marked the workman's mind and hand; and all the contents of his Wessex country. The views of life, of society, of religion, views multifarious and odd, entertained there, are familiar to him: but his knowledge is not a source of power alone; it is a source of beauty too.

A good example of the rustic talk which Mr. Hardy so finely captures is the dialogue, in *Far from the Madding Crowd,* between Joseph Poorgrass and Coggan and Mark Clark at the Buck's Head, where Poorgrass had stopped to refresh himself, leaving the coffin which contained the body of the unhappy victim of Sergeant Troy, Fanny Robin, in his cart and in the rain:

"I believe you be a Chapel member, Joseph. That I do."

"Oh no! no! I don't go as far as that."

"For my part," said Coggan, "I'm a staunch Church of England."

"Ay, and faith so be I," said Mark Clark.

"I won't say much for myself; I don't wish to," Coggan continued with that tendency to talk on principles which is characteristic of the barley-corn. "But I've never changed a single doctrine: I've stuck like a plaster to the old faith I was born in. Yes: there's this to be said for the Church, a man can belong to his Church and live in his cheerful old inn, and never trouble or worry his mind about doctrines at all. But to be a meetinger, you must go to chapel in all winds and weathers, and make yourself as frantic as a skit. Not that but Chapel members be clever chaps enough in their way. They can lift up beautiful prayers out of their own heads, all about their families and shipwrecks in the newspaper."

"They can—they can," said Mark Clark, with corroborative feeling; "but we Churchmen, you see, must have it all printed aforehand, or, dang it all, we should no more know what to say to a great person like the Lord than babes unborn."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
The author of *Treasure Island*.
From the drawing by Joseph Simpson, R.B.A

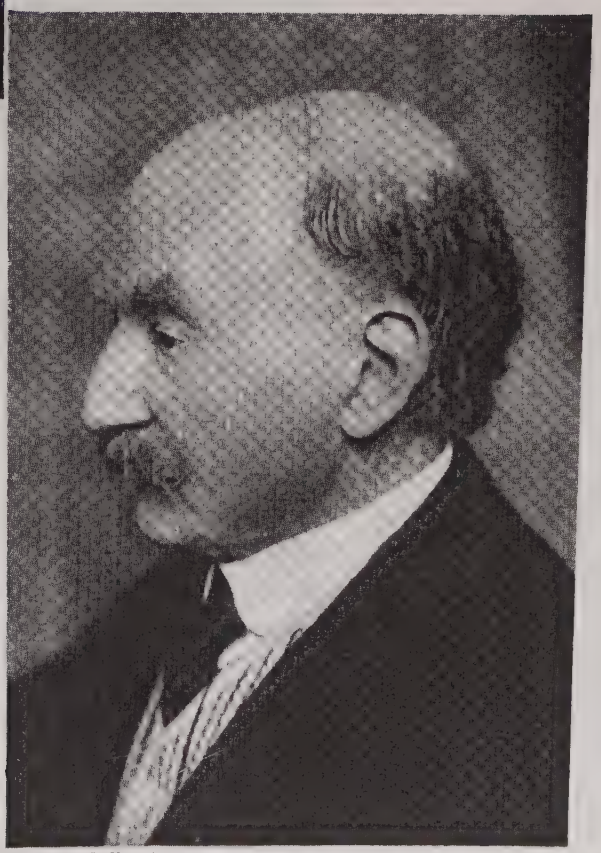

Photo: E. O. Hoppé.

THOMAS HARDY, O.M.
The last of the great Victorians

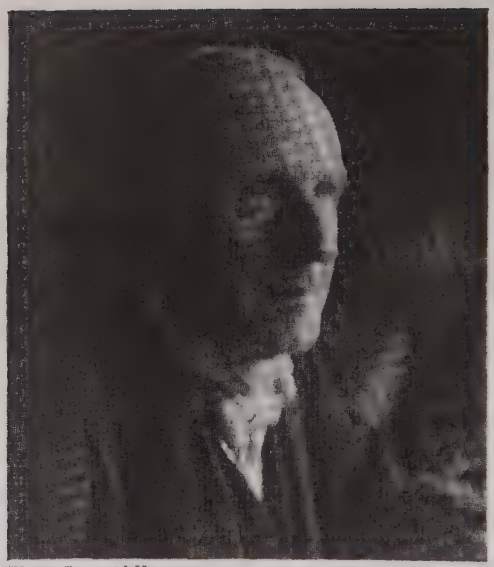

Photo. Reginald Haines.

LORD MORLEY.

Statesman and man of letters, Lord Morley will live in literary history by his studies of the eighteenth century French philosophers.

"Chapel folk be more hand-in-glove with them above than we," said Joseph thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Coggan. "We know very well that if any one goes to heaven they will. . . . But I hate a fellow who'll change his old ancient doctrines for the sake of getting to heaven. I'd as soon turn King's evidence for the few pounds you get."

All these characteristics of Mr. Hardy will be found in other novels: in *The Trumpet Major* (a study of the impact of the Napoleon invasion terror on Wessex life), *A Laodicean, The Hand of Ethelberta, Wessex Tales,* and *Life's Little Ironies.* And equally will Mr. Hardy's style be found to be the same in all his novels. It is an ordered, deliberate, unhurrying style which reaches its effect as by tessellation. It can empurple itself, but it never runs to the purple patch, as, also, it never, or seldom, throws up epigram. His style seems to be native to the dignity of his subject and to the drama of life in an ancient and slow-moving world.

The Dynasts

Mr. Hardy's longest and greatest work is *The Dynasts,* which appeared in three parts in 1904, 1906, and 1908. The whole of this chapter would not furnish space to explain and illustrate the unfolding of this great sombre drama, at once realistic and allegorical, of Wessex in the Napoleonic period. With the Wessex peasants mingle other-world beings, incarnations of the Immanent Will, the Spirit of the Years, the Phantom Intelligences, and the Spirit of the Pities. The new-born superstitions of the countryside mingle with the old.

The Dynasts is a gigantic conception of one of the greatest ages in our history: it introduces kings and statesmen; its stage is Europe; its atmosphere is war; the whole drama is shaken by battle and volcano-bursts of history.

§ 4

Poetry

Thomas Hardy was a poet before he was a novelist, and now after ceasing to be a novelist (his last novel, *Jude the Obscure,* was published nearly thirty years ago) he remains a great and prolific poet, with a place in English poetry as much his own as was his place in English fiction. Hardy never conformed. On the other hand, he has never been insensitive to criticism. He abandoned fiction when *Jude the Obscure* was misunderstood and cheaply ridiculed.

And then he returned to poetry—his first love—but returned to it a thoughtful and brooding man, to whom it was now a cup to be filled by his experience of life. His poem *In the Seventies* is a beautiful recalling of his first secret inspirations:

> In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,
> Penned tight,
> Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light
> On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest
> In the seventies; aye, I bore them in my breast
> Penned tight.
>
> . . . . .
>
> In the seventies nought could darken or destroy it,
> Locked in me,
> Though as delicate as lamp-worm's lucency;
> Neither mist nor murk could weaken or alloy it
> In the seventies!—could not darken or destroy it,
> Locked in me.

The reader can best make his first acquaintance with Mr. Hardy's poetry by taking up the smaller collection, *Late Lyrics and Earlier,* published in 1922. In very many of these poems we find Hardy's inveterate tendency to look back, to regret lost opportunity, or to marvel at the outcome or the no-outcome of first meetings, and the emotion of remembering ships that passed in the night. It is thus in *The West-of-Wessex* girl who was "blithe as blithe could be," and had been his for the asking:

But never I squired my Wessex girl
In jaunts to Hoe or street
When hearts were high in beat,
Nor saw her in the marbled ways
Where market-people meet,
That in her bounding early days
Were friendly with her feet.

And again in the little story-poem, *Faint Heart in a Railway Train,* which is so short that we venture to quote it all:

At nine in the morning there passed a church,
At ten there passed me by the sea,
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,
At two a forest of oak and birch,
And then, on a platform, she:

A radiant stranger, who saw not me,
I queried, "Get out to her do I dare?"
But I kept my seat in search for a plea,
And the wheels moved on. O, could it be
That I had alighted there!

Such laments have nothing to do with a personal "pessimism," for they are of the texture of life and have their counterpart in the experience of every man and woman of us.

But the past and the passage of long years are not always made a theme of sadness. In *One who Lived and Died where he was Born* we have another note. The infant was carried downstairs for the first time; eighty years later he went up the same stairs for the last time. The picture is one to quieten the spirit in an age like ours:

On those nights in November—
Apart eighty years—
The babe and the bent one
Who traversed those stairs
From the early first time
To the last feeble climb—

That fresh and that spent one
Were even the same;
Yea, who passed in November
As infant and bent one,
Those stairs.

In many of Hardy's poems there is a certain element of wantonness in attaining poignant and remorseless effects which sometimes gives the reader pause in Hardy's novels, as in *Far from the Madding Crowd,* where the whole destiny of a poor girl is turned from bright promise to certain doom through her mistaking a church for the one to which she was walking to be safely married. We have this kind of effect in the almost grotesquely remorseless little narrative poem, *The Whipper-in.* A youth who had quarrelled with his father and run away to sea, now returns, penitent, to his home with the intention to help the old man. Catching sight of a red coat, he imagines he sees his father going to the kennel-shed. To an old friend whom he has met he stops to parley and to realise the situation:

"I curs'd and fought my father—aye,
And sailed to a foreign land;
And feeling sorry, I'm back, to stay,
Please God, as his helping hand.
Surely it is my father
Near where the kennels stand."

"True, Whipper-in he used to be
For twenty years or more;
And you did go away to sea,
As youths have done before.
Yes, oddly enough, that red there
Is the very coat he wore.

"But he—he's dead; was thrown, somehow,
And gave his back a crick;
And though that is his coat, 'tis now
The scarecrow of a rick;
You'll see when you get nearer—
'Tis spread out on a stick.

"You see, when all had settled down
Your mother's things were sold,
And she went back to her own town,
And the coat, ate out with mould,
Is now used by the farmer
For scaring, as 'tis old."

It is perhaps a fair suggestion that here the pathos is too ingeniously constructive, a criticism which, if it be just, does not apply to the *dénouement* of *The Two Wives,* a version of a *Smoker's Club Story.* Two husbands sit together while their wives are out boating. There comes the rumour of an accident:

Tidings came that the boat was capsized
and that one of the ladies
Was drowned—which of them
was unknown:
And I marvelled—my friend's wife?—
or was it my own
Who had gone in such wise to the land
where the sun as the shade is?
—We learnt that it was *his* had so gone.

Then I cried in unrest: "He is free!
But no good is releasing
To him as it would be to me!"
—"But it is," said the woman I loved,
quietly.
"How?" I asked her.—"Because he
has long loved me too without
ceasing,
And it's just the same thing, don't you see."

These short and gripping narrative poems of taut experience and unuttered counsel are such as only Mr. Hardy could have conceived. We would name *A Woman's Fancy, The Contretemps, The Wife Comes Back, Side by Side, At the Dinner-table, Outside the Casement,* and *In a London Flat.*

Much has been said about Mr. Hardy's "pessimism." But the name "pessimist" is as untrue to human instinct and ex-

perience as the word "Atheist." No sane man can, or does, deny the existence of God. He may doubt His existence, or be bewildered by His ways to man, but a denial of His Being is not possible to one who retains a sense of the limitations of the human mind. And the man who can be pronounced a pessimist is similarly outside the pale of human experience: he has become useless to his fellow-men. Mr. Hardy has kept and shown, in every word he has written, his faith in human nature. He may think that we are all creatures of circumstance, not successful suppliants to a personal Ruler of the Universe. But all his words are evidence of his belief that, however doubtfully man is guided through the stormy ravine of life, he has within himself powers of doing and enduring which he can cultivate in the individual and in the race. To "think nobly of the soul" is all.

§ 5

Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson was born at Edinburgh, November, 1850, his father and his grandfather being well-known lighthouse-builders. At school he drew slight profit from his books, but a good deal from "Crusoeing," as he called it—"a word that covers all extempore eating in the open air; digging, perhaps, a house under the margin of the links, kindling a fire of sea-gear, and cooking apples there." This gipsy-spirit in his blood was to abide with him through life. From a boy he was a writer also; and as he grew in years he became, as he has told us,

> The sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann. *Cain,* an epic, was (save the mark!) an imitation of Sordello: *Robin Hood,* a tale in verse, took an eclectic middle course among the fields of Keats, Chaucer, and Morris: in *Monmouth,* a tragedy, I reposed on the bosom of Mr. Swinburne: in my innumer-

able gouty-footed lyrics I followed many masters. . . . This, like it or not, is the way to learn to write.

That is one way, no doubt, but it is not the only way. Writers such as Hazlitt, Lamb, and Wordsworth spin from their own vitals their own web of style. But perhaps it was the only way for him. At any rate, he did evolve a style, which, although the art of it, especially in dialogue, is often but imperfectly concealed, is lucid, strong, and sharply graphic—a style, though lacking in the deeper music, seldom without its own peculiar charm. He had also all the gifts of a great story-teller; and a story-teller, like a poet, is born and not made.

These experiments went on for several years. Meanwhile, he studied engineering, but made nothing of it. Then he read for the Bar, with more success, passed as Advocate, clapped a brass plate on his door-post, and awaited briefs. Three or four came in. But "old father Antic the Law" turned out a bore of the first water. And so, without further parleyings with fate, he set up, at twenty-five, as a writer by profession.

What Stevenson was like, in mind and body, at that date is as familiar, even to us who never saw him, as one of our own friends. One of the best word-portraits left of him is that of Henley's sonnet:

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion, impudence, and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

This paints the man in all his aspects, strong and weak alike. Even "most vain" is justified. In his dress, as in his style, there was always something artificial—something of the poser. One day, in Bond Street, Andrew Lang declined to be seen talking to him—and no wonder; he was arrayed in a black shirt, a red tie, a black brigand cloak, and a velvet smoking-cap. On another occasion he was seen in a lady's fur cape clasped by a large brooch, into which was stuck a bunch of daffodils. One description of himself, by an American reporter, he used to quote with an amused resentment: "a tall, willowy figure, surmounted by a classic head, from which issued a hacking cough."

The Works of R. L. S.

That cough, alas! was characteristic—a sign of the lung trouble which was ever with him, and which was to kill him in the end. He travelled far and wide in search of health. It was at Barbizon that he met with Mrs. Osborne, who afterwards became his wife. A canoe-journey from Antwerp to Pontoise in 1876 was recorded in his first book, *An Inland Voyage,* while in 1879 appeared the *Travels with a Donkey through the Cevennes*—two delightful books, not only for their vivid travel-pictures but for their Hamlet-moralisings upon men and things. Yet neither of them made anything which could be called a hit. But in 1881 *Treasure Island* was accepted by *Young Folks,* and on its publication as a book was hailed as the best thing of its kind since *Robinson Crusoe.* As a romance for boys it is ideal, with its scenery of sea and island, its pirates and its hidden treasure, while children of a larger growth can take delight in the drawing of the desperadoes, Pew, Long John Silver, and Black Dog, who are in no way characters of melodrama, but deadly living men. *Kidnapped,* and its sequel *Catriona,* with their scenes of daring deeds,—miraculous escapes, and mortal combats, laid among the savage crags and forests of the Grampian Mountains, belong to the same class of pure romance.

Photo: A. A. Temple.

THE CHALET AT BOX HILL, WHERE MUCH OF GEORGE MEREDITH'S WORK WAS WRITTEN

Photo: L. E. A.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

From the original set of illustrations done for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Professor Hubert Herkomer, R.A.

Angel Clare, walking in his sleep, came to Tess in bed, muttering sadly, "My wife, dead, dead!" Then he lifted her softly in his arms, and carried her forth in the night to "the cloister-garth where were the graves of the monks," and upon one of these "carefully laid her down."

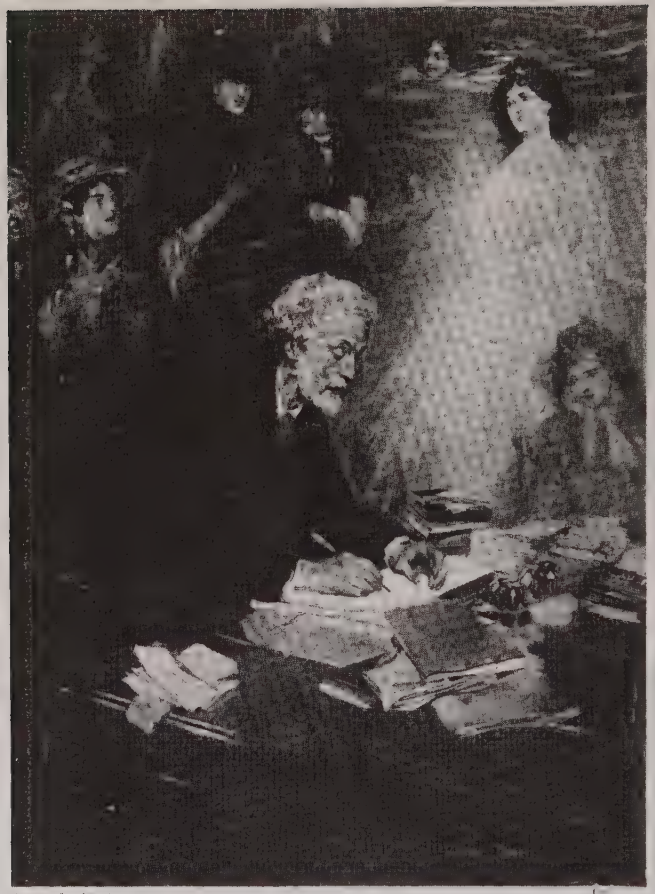

Photo. Lafayette

GEORGE MEREDITH

From the drawing by Clare Clive

Meredith was the creator of a series of remarkable women, a number of whom are incorporated in this illustration.

The characters in the drawing, from left to right and above, Evelina in *Farina* (below) Rhoda Fleming and her father; Diana Warrington and one Jocelyn; (above) Aminta in *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*; (below) Lucy Desborough in *Richard Feverel*; Diana of the Crossways; and on extreme right Clara Middleton, the charming rogue in porcelain of *The Egoist*.

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Macmillan & Co. from their edition of the "Jungle Book"

MOWGLI AND BAGHEERA

From the illustration in colour by Maurice and Edward Detmold.

Kipling's *Jungle Book*, in which he tells of the boy reared in a Wolf's den and taught by his foster-parents the ways of the Jungle Folk, must rank as one of the most delightful books of all time.

Here Mowgli talks with Bagheera the Panther, which with Baloo the Bear and Akela the Lone Wolf were his allies in times both good and bad.

One morning Stevenson awoke from a strange dream. The scenes and characters were still vividly before him. A story was all ready to his hand, and he wrote it at white heat. It was *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* The book was the best seller of the day. The allegory of the good and evil selves in man appealed to people to whom novels were taboo. A sermon was preached upon it in St. Paul's. It went to the four corners of the earth, and it made his fortune and his fame secure.

In 1889 appeared *The Master of Ballantræ,* perhaps his finest work. The story, told by Mackellar, the steward of an old and noble family, is chiefly that of the two brothers of the house, the elder, the Master, charming but cruel-hearted, and the younger, Henry, simple, plain, and frank. The brothers came to fight a duel. The description of it is a masterpiece of graphic and dramatic writing, and a specimen of Stevenson's surpassing gift of story-telling.

Some of Stevenson's best work is in his shorter stories. Among the finest are those included in the gay and entertaining *New Arabian Nights—The Suicide Club* and *The Rajah's Diamond;* that distilled quintessence of romance, *The Pavilion on the Links;* that most fascinating of problem-stories, *Markheim;* and *A Lodging for the Night,* with its study of that strange ill-omened bird of darkness, Villon, rogue and poet, scholar and assassin.

The articles and essays which had appeared from time to time in periodicals were gathered into the three volumes *Virginibus Puerisque, Familiar Studies of Men and Books,* and *Memories and Portraits.* The sweet and wise philosophy of life, the genial moralisings on the joys and sorrows which are the lot of every child of man, have gone straight into the hearts of thousands. Such an essay as *The Lantern-bearers,* to take a single instance, must be ranked among the very finest that exist in any language.

Stevenson made no claim to be one of the great poets. Yet his verse, in *A Child's Garden* and *Underwoods,* is extremely charming, always the work of a fine craftsman, and at times is something more.

Few things in the lives of men of letters are better known than the last days of Stevenson—how, in 1891, he settled at Vailima—how he became a kind of chief among the natives, who styled him Tusitala, the Writer of Tales—how, after several lesser works, he began, in 1894, his last great piece of fiction, *Weir of Hermiston,* based on the history of Lord Braxfield, the hanging judge—and how, one evening, after working on it, he was talking gaily to his wife on the verandah when he suddenly sank down and died. The natives, sorrow-stricken, bore the bier to its abiding-place upon the island's mountain-peak. And there, to-day, the pilgrim to the grave may read upon it his own valiant verses:

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
  And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me—
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
    And the hunter home from the hill.

§ 6

Rudyard Kipling

Mr. Rudyard Kipling, the most original and underived of our living writers, was born in Bombay on December 30, 1865. His father, John Lockwood Kipling, was an eminent art professor and museum curator under the Government of India. By descent Rudyard Kipling is endowed with English, Scottish, and Irish blood; his earliest training gave him a command of Hindustani speech; and his wanderings over vast tracts of

land and sea have made him a great citizen of the world and of the British Empire in particular.

Mr. Kipling was first heard of in this country in 1889, though in India he had then been well known for three years by the stories and verses which he contributed to *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, a daily newspaper of which he was assistant editor. We now know these writings, which first appeared in London in the form of the *Rupee Books,* as *Plain Tales* and *Departmental Ditties.* It is said that these were rather tolerated than welcomed by the editor, who preferred to see Mr. Kipling concentrate on leading articles and other ordinary newspaper matter. The *Rupee Books,* and the appearance of such stories as "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvany" and "The Head of the District" in *Macmillan's Magazine,* blazed Kipling's trail into the hearts of English readers. Then began his astounding rise to fame and imperial importance. In a chapter which must be as short as this one any connected narrative of that progress cannot be attempted, but it may be well to give the dates of Mr. Kipling's chief works in tabular form as follows:

1886. Departmental Ditties.
1887. Plain Tales from the Hills.
1888–9. Soldiers Three, The Story of the Gadsbys, Under the Deodars, The Phantom Rickshaw, Wee Willie Winkie.
1890. Life's Handicap.
1891. The Light that Failed.
1892. Barrack Room Ballads.
1893. Many Inventions.
1894. The Jungle Book.
1895. The Second Jungle Book.
1896. The Seven Seas.
1897. Captains Courageous.
1898. The Day's Work.
1899. Stalky & Co. and From Sea to Sea.
1901. Kim.

1902. Just So Stories.
1903. The Five Nations.
1904. Traffics and Discoveries.
1906. Puck of Pook's Hill.
1909. Actions and Reactions.
1910. Rewards and Fairies.
1913–18. The Harbour Watch (a play), The New Armies in Training, France at War, Fringes of the Fleet, Sea Warfare, A Diversity of Creatures, The Years Between.

When we recall—if indeed we can—the originality, the sleepless energy of observation, the voracious appetite for facts and ways of life, and the magnetic appeal of it all to millions in all English-speaking lands which are embodied in these books, the list here given becomes amazing. Kipling has revealed India, Canada, Egypt, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the seven seas, and the British Army and Navy to the men of his own period in the spirit and terms of that period. And it must be added that he has himself in a measure created that spirit and invented those terms.

It was impossible that any writer of his range and drive could gain universal acceptance, and it has followed from this that while Kipling has secured a greater number and variety of admirers than any other living English writer, he has also found a great number of opponents and irreconcilable critics. He has been abused under such names as "banjo bardlet," "an imperial megalomaniac," "a tinpot ear-tickler," "the drum-major in Joe's Brummagem brass band," and many others.

The main and brief task is to seek out the true nature of Mr. Kipling's achievement; and by his achievement must be understood, here, his purely literary standing as judged in the quiet of one's own mind, and by reasonable standards of judgment. Just as we do not appraise the historic and relative value of a victory by a London "mafficking" night, so one cannot ap-

praise Mr. Kipling's true literary character and value until we forget the rush and racket of his wonderful career.

A Portrayer of Class Character

It may be useful to suggest some of his mistakes. As a story-writer he discloses very small impulse to portray individual character, or even human nature as such. He is essentially a portrayer of collective or class character. He has drawn many a man for the Empire's sake, for the Army's sake, for the Civil Service's sake, for the Tribe's sake, and in doing so he has often touched us profoundly in our collective character as Empire-makers, as soldiers, as a governing people, as managers of alien races and families of men. He has done this with such vigour that he has shaken the whole house, as it were, with his bell-ringing and clarion summonses. Yet, singly, we remain comparatively unconquered; singly, men do not find in Kipling's books an intimate message to their hearts and spiritual needs. This intimacy and depth of appeal is denied to him. What is the difference between Byron's power over his generation and Kipling's over his? It is surely a difference of literary character and of fundamental qualities. It is a difference in literary fusion.

This fusion is a large thing, not easily explained. Fusion is that "third power" to which a composition must rise before it can even be considered as a piece of enduring literature. Fusion is the taking up of lower things into higher: it is a pervading reference to the master facts and conceptions; it is the postulation of the soul in many phases; it is the humility of effort, the tenderness of power, the anticipation of the eternal query, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" And this power of fusion is surely Mr. Kipling's lack. The fire and the whirlwind are his, but not the still, small voice, except very rarely, as in *Recessional.* This is a great hymn; yet it will not compare, in depth and permanency of appeal, with "O God, our help in ages past."

The abundance and sharpness of vision which is commonly considered Mr. Kipling's greatest possession must not be confused with true literary power over things seen. Mr. Kipling assuredly has the power to make us see as he sees, but there is a sense of physical strain and of the transitoriness of physical effort. It is true that while we read we are gripped, amused, touched to tears, and generally annexed. And if this is enough, if this domination is the mark of true literature, then our time has shown such literary judgment in its worship of Mr. Kipling that the critic's occupation may be considered gone. The generation that can so promptly choose and applaud the real thing has no need of guidance.

But if true literature is something more than masterful diction and plenteous vision, if its gifts do not end with ivory and apes and peacocks, but rather begin with these and end with the ineffable traffic between spirit and spirit, if its last purpose is not to give news of the world but rather by things that are not to bring to naught things that are, then it may be suggested, without hesitation, as without offence, that Mr. Kipling's writings are distinguished from all others of our time in giving much to the reader and little to the man.

Look at Mr. Kipling's work how and where one will, it grips you and leaves go; it is, and then it is not. His rhythms may haunt the ear, and the eye may recover the dusty parade-ground of Fort Amara; or the long red fires of the railway sleepers burning the dead whom even Jim Hawkins could not save; or Durga Dass, in his cee-spring buggy, complacently deciding to pull down the house where Ameera lies dead; or the view from Lalun's window, the red tombs of dead Emperors beyond the river, and very far away through the blue heat-blaze a glint of the snows of the Himalayas, or that unforgettable picture:

> By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,
> There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;

For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay.
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer
China 'crost the Bay!—

all these, and many another scene may return by chance, in the hurly-burly of the memory, but do they obey any imperative call of thought or feeling?

The "Jungle Book"

Yet there is one work of Mr. Kipling's which escapes this great limitation. It is now generally held that his best work is the *Jungle Book*, and this chapter has been written in vain if it does not suggest why this judgment is so general and so just. Because he has no impulse to draw individual character but only collective character, Mr. Kipling succeeds wonderfully in a field where only tribal or collective character calls for portrayal, and where the emotions evoked can be studied with all the personal detachment inherent in the nature of the subject. Where real individuality does not exist, or at least is not capable of literary portraiture, we accept the character of a family or a species of animals as supreme, and when that is embodied, as Mr. Kipling has embodied it, in "Shere Khan," the tiger, and "Bagheera," the black panther, Baloo, the sleepy brown bear, and the contemptible Bandar-log, the monkeys, and, above all, in the man-cub Mowgli—that wonderful link between man and beast—then there is an end to criticism and limitation. Here Mr. Kipling has brought his ascertained powers to the material on which they can produce a unique effect. We might quote, did space allow, and for the joy of doing so, the scene in which

Mowgli defends himself to his tutors Baloo and Bagheera, for having consorted for an hour with the Monkey People.

There are many other aspects of Mr. Kipling, as story and fact, which cannot be considered here. One, which has been pointed out by Mr. George Moore, must be obvious to all; that is his amazing vocabulary. Unfortunately, even this contains a vast amount of slang which often appears to be introduced for slang's sake, and not as a necessary instrument of language and thought. And Mr. Moore adds, "He writes with the eye that appreciates all that the eye can see, but of the heart he knows nothing, for the heart cannot be observed: his characters are therefore external, and they are stationary." This judgment goes, perhaps, rather too far; but it suggests certain fundamental characteristics which render it doubtful whether, another century hence, Mr. Kipling's power will be felt in anything like the measure in which it has been felt in our time.

§ 7

It is obvious that in this Outline it is impossible even to mention the names of the great army of considerable writers who have written in English in the later years of the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth. Thanks largely to the enormous popularity of Dickens and Thackeray, the novel became by far the most common form of literary expression, and for the last seventy years novels have poured from the printing-presses in ever-increasing numbers. It will suffice here to refer to two only of the later Victorian novelists.

George Gissing

George Gissing was born in Wakefield in 1857 and died in 1903. His first novel, *Workers in the Dawn,* was published when he was twenty-two. Gissing was a fastidious and conscientious literary artist, but his work brought him pitifully small pecuniary returns. He worked for a time as a clerk in Liverpool.

Photo: Pouncy, Dorchester.

THOMAS HARDY'S BIRTHPLACE

Thomas Hardy was born at Upper Bockhampton, near Dorchester, on June 2, 1840.

THE HOUSE OF R. L. STEVENSON IN SAMOA

Towards the close of the year 1880 Stevenson, at the termination of his second cruise among the islands of the Pacific, arrived in Samoa.

Here at Apia, he bought the estate which he called Vailima and which was to be his home for the few remaining years of his life. At Vailima some of his best work was done, including *Weir of Hermiston*, and some of the most beautiful of his Letters.

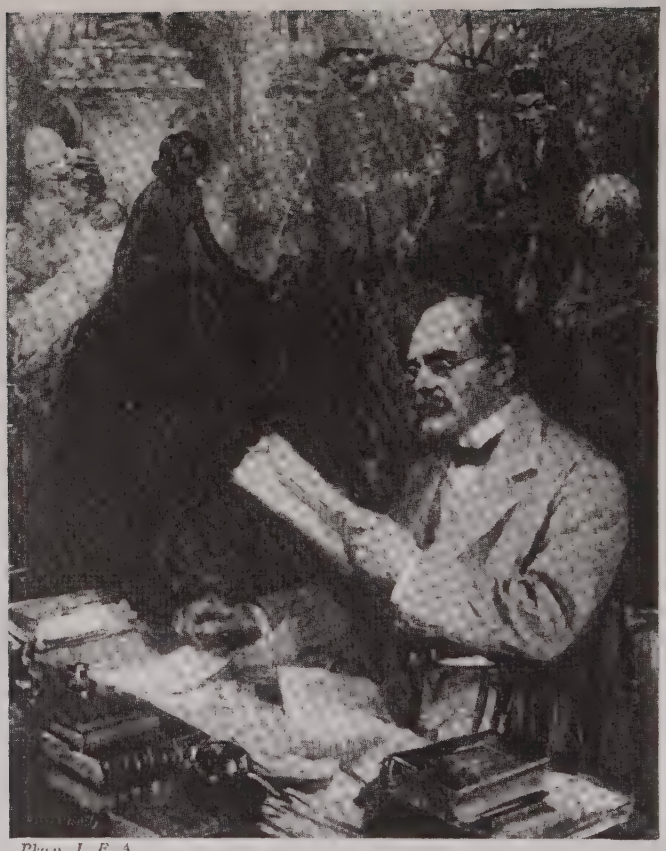

Photo. L. E. A.

RUDYARD KIPLING

From the drawing by Cyrus Cuneo.

The above portrait of Rudyard Kipling surrounded by the creations of his brain carries us away to the East which he has drawn for us so often and so well. There in the forefront is Mowgli, the Mowgli of our schooldays, with his brothers Bagheera, the panther and Baloo, the bear. Kipling's three soldier heroes are immediately recognisable. We can imagine them in all the glories of walking-out dress setting forth to perpetuate some fresh misdemeanour. But in the left of the picture we are carried to the old Moulmein Pagoda and share in the memories of Sudi-yaw-lat's soldier-lover, for whom as for us "there ain't no ouses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay."

He half starved in America. He was for a time an underpaid "crammer" in London. He lived in cellars and garrets, grudging four and sixpence a week for his lodgings and being fearful of paying more than sixpence for a meal. He was a recluse with few friends, reasonably fearful of the life that he found so hard, but always a genuine artist refusing to write below his best. He had an intense admiration for Dickens, but he had none of the master's humour. Mr. H. G. Wells has said of Gissing: "He had some sort of blindness towards his fellow-men, so that he, who was so copiously intelligent in the things of the study, misunderstood, blundered, was nervously diffident, and wilful and spasmodic in common affairs, in employment and buying and selling and the normal conflicts of intercourse." In his novel *The Odd Women,* Gissing speaks for himself when he says: "Life has always been full of worrying problems for me. I can't take things in the simple way that comes natural to other men." His experience and his temperament are reflected in his books. *New Grub Street,* one of the best novels that he ever wrote, is a revelation of the hardship of the writer's lot; *The Nether World* is a demonstration of the demoralising ugliness of poverty; *Born in Exile* is the story of an impecunious scholar, yearning for the beautiful and compelled to live amid the sordid. Towards the end of the century a more than usually successful novel enabled Gissing to make the journey to Italy of which he had dreamed for years, and the result was a very beautiful book, *By the Ionian Sea.* The dignified semi-autobiography, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft,* was published in the year of his death. Gissing was also the author of the best of all the critical studies of Dickens.

§ 8

Henry Austin Dobson

Henry Austin Dobson was perhaps the most charming of later Victorian essayists. Austin Dobson, who was born in

1840 and died in 1921, was for years a clerk in the Board of Trade, but despite the modernity of his surroundings he lived in the eighteenth century, writing always exquisitely of Chesterfield and Walpole, Goldsmith and Johnson, Peg Woffington and Richard Steele. Austin Dobson was a poet of pleasant and most attractive artificiality. The following rondel, *The Wanderer,* may be quoted as an example of his muse:

Love comes back to his vacant dwelling—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!
We see him stand by the open door,
With his great eyes sad, and his bosom swelling.

He makes as though in our arms repelling,
He fain would lie as he lay before;
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!

Ah! who shall help us from over-spelling,
That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore!
E'en as we doubt in our hearts once more,
With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling,
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling.

John Morley

The greatest name of these years in criticism is that of John Morley, who was born in 1838 and died in 1923. The latter half of his life was devoted to politics, but in his first period he edited the *Fortnightly Review, Pall Mall Gazette,* and *Macmillan's Magazine,* and wrote his famous critical studies of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot. Morley inherited the sceptical tradition of John Stuart Mill and the middle Victorians, and he was in keen sympathy with the group of great French philosophers who prepared the way for the Revolution. He was a gifted writer, and his literary fame rests mainly on these three studies. His books on Rousseau, Voltaire, Cromwell, and his great biographies of Cobden and Gladstone will be long read, for they had qualities all their own which cannot be superseded. One of these is a firm and helpful wisdom of life conveyed in re-

flections which at once illuminate his subject and life and character generally. In his *Rousseau,* for example, you alight on such memorable little homilies as this:

> The spirit of man moves in mysterious ways, and expands like the plants of the field with strange and silent stirrings. It is one of the chief tests of worthiness and freedom from vulgarity of soul in us, to be able to have faith that this expansion is a reality, and the most important of all realities. We do not rightly seize the type of Socrates if we can never forget that he was the husband of Xanthippe, nor David's if we can only think of him as the murderer of Uriah, nor Peter's if we can simply remember that he denied his Master. Our vision is only blindness, if we can never bring ourselves to see the possibilities of deep mystic aspiration behind the vile outer life of a man.

Probably no writer influenced Morley's own life and character more than Wordsworth, and we cannot do better than quote a few lines from the essay which he contributed to a complete edition of the poet published in 1888:

> What Wordsworth does *is* to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. . . . But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into moods of settled peace, to touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.

In defining Wordsworth's inner life and outlook Lord Morley revealed much of his own.

§ 9

Lafcadio Hearn

Lafcadio Hearn is one of the most remarkable figures in later English literary history. His father was an Irish military

surgeon who ran away with a Greek girl, and Lafcadio was named after the Greek island of Lefcada, where he was born in 1850. When he was six his family went back to Ireland, and soon afterwards his mother left his father, who married again and Lafcadio was brought up by a great-aunt, a pious Roman Catholic who sent the boy to Ushaw College, Durham. He appears to have quarrelled with his relations, and when he was nineteen he was penniless in New York, afterwards earning his living for some years as a journalist in Cincinnati, New Orleans, and the West Indies.

In 1890 he went to Japan, where at last he found a land that he could love. He became a teacher of English at the University of Tokio, married a Japanese wife, became a naturalised Japanese, and adopted the Buddhist religion. He died in 1904. Hearn was a small, swarthy, silent man, very shy and sensitive, with qualities that made it easy for him to understand the Oriental mind. His books, indeed, were the first important revelation of the Japanese to Western readers. As a literary artist he was influenced by Théophile Gautier, caring more than for anything else for perfection of expression. Often he is mannered, still more often he is rhapsodical. But he is always a keen observer, especially of the things to which he was most sympathetic, and never wearying in his adopted country "of watching this picturesque life—of studying the costumes, brilliant with butterfly colours—and the statuesque semi-nudity of labouring hundreds —and the untaught grace of attitudes—and the simplicity of manners." The Japanese themselves accept Hearn as an accurate interpreter of their lives. A Japanese writer has declared that his books are "in perfect accord with the sweet glamour of old Japan." His best-known writings are *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan, Out of the East, Gleanings in Buddha Fields, In Ghostly Japan,* and *Japan,* an attempt at interpretation.

Among the later Victorian critics, Leslie Stephen, the author of *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Cen-*

tury, born in 1832 and who died in 1904, and Andrew Lang, who was born in 1844 and died in 1912, are the best remembered. Lang was a writer of catholic interest and versatile achievement. He translated Homer into musical prose. He wrote biographies. He was a poet and an authority on folklore, he was the author of a history of English literature and an admirable life of Joan of Arc. Andrew Lang was a man of most attractive character, affectionately described by Robert Louis Stevenson as "Andrew of the brindled hair."

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XXXVII

DRAMATIC LITERATURE

DRAMATIC LITERATURE

§ 1

Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan

IN his book *The Old Drama and the New*, Mr. William Archer states that "whatever the reason, the fact remains that, as far as dramatic authorship is concerned, the whole century from 1720 to 1820 was a dreary desert broken by a single oasis—the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan." Sheridan, like Goldsmith, was an Irishman. Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan was born in Dublin on October 30, 1751, and, like Goldsmith, was of Anglo-Saxon origin. Life was kinder to Sheridan than it was to his older countryman. It had been hard for Goldsmith to get his plays performed, but it was easy for Sheridan to do so. The young man took fame and fortune in an easy stride. He was the husband of a celebrated beauty and the author of a great and prosperous comedy at twenty-three. He was running up to distinction almost at the moment that Goldsmith was creeping into his grave. The reputation he got in the theatre was enriched by the reputation he got in Society and Parliament; and it was hard to tell whether he was better known to his contemporaries as the author of *The School for Scandal* or the impeacher of Warren Hastings. He wrote seven plays, *The Rivals, St. Patrick's Day, or The Scheming Lieutenant, The Duenna* (a comic opera), *The School for Scandal, The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed, A Trip to Scarborough,* and *Pizarro,* an uncommonly dull tragedy in

five acts. He died on July 7, 1816, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The difference between his work and that of Goldsmith is profound. Goldsmith was full of fun: Sheridan was full of wit. The first is a matter of spirit; the second is a matter of mind. A great wit can be destitute of a sense of fun. Goldsmith's mind has none of the sheer brilliance which illuminates almost the whole of Sheridan's writing, but neither has the countryside got the brilliance of a city. All Sheridan's defects are forgotten and forgiven because of the delight we get from the brilliant dialogue and the lively characters. What genius was in the young man of twenty-three who wrote *The Rivals* and created the character of Mrs. Malaprop! "Sure!" she said, "if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs."

"The School for Scandal"

The School for Scandal stands above all Sheridan's plays, as, indeed, it stands above most plays, but it is not isolated from his work. Both *The Rivals* and *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed* are plays of great quality, enough, by themselves, to have created a high reputation for their author. Sheridan's one tragedy, *Pizarro,* is an incredibly dull piece, interesting only because it shows that even a great wit can sometimes be a great bore. But it was something of a miracle that inside four years three indisputably great comedies, *She Stoops to Conquer, The Rivals,* and *The School for Scandal,* should suddenly have disturbed the stream of tedious stuff which had flowed through the English theatre for fifty years and was to continue its flow for nearly a century. Goldsmith and Sheridan were brilliant flares which showed how deep the surrounding darkness was, and when they went out the darkness was deeper. After their death, the drama in England rapidly dropped into the gutter, and was not drawn out of it again until a hundred years had passed.

MABEL
LUCIE
ATTWELL

§ 2

Henrik Ibsen

It is to Ibsen that Europe owes the renascence of dramatic literature. He, who was born at Skien, in South Norway, on March 20, 1828, was first of all a chemist, then a journalist, and then director of Ole Bull's theatre at Bergen. In 1857 he was appointed director of the National Theatre at Christiania, which became bankrupt in 1862. Ibsen had then written a number of heroic plays and the first of his social satires, *Love's Comedy*, the latter making him very unpopular. This unpopularity, together with the failure of the National Theatre and the great failure, in his judgment, of his country to fight for the Danes in their struggle with Germany, made Ibsen sick of his own people, and in 1864 he left Norway and went to live in various places, chiefly Rome, Dresden, and Munich, where he remained until 1892, in which year he returned to Christiania. He was reluctantly pensioned by the Norwegian parliament in 1866. In that and the next year, he published *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, dramatic poems of great power and quality which are, perhaps, his best work. *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* are companion pieces, the first being a picture of a good man who falls into disaster because he is ignorant of the proper purpose of love, while the second is a picture of a wilful man whose efforts to achieve love are wrecked by a selfishness and romantic waywardness.

As a poet, although he was a great one, Ibsen had hardly any influence; but as a social reformer, as a commentator on systems, his influence was extraordinary. Sometimes, indeed, he had an influence which was absent from his intention. *The Doll's House*, for example, caused him to be regarded as a strong advocate of women's suffrage when, in fact, he was not particularly in favour of votes for women or votes for anybody. He was a passionate advocate of personal freedom, but personal freedom was not necessarily a matter of voting. Ibsen, sometimes regarded as a pessimist, had a profound faith in the future of man-

kind. It was his very faith in man's future which earned the reputation of pessimist for him; for it has always been the custom of ultimately optimistic men to be exceedingly and volubly pessimistic about man as he now is. He found very little that was worth while in contemporary institutions, social or political, because he found that these institutions, in greater or less degree, prevented the individual from exercising his full freedom. His plays are well-made plays, as was inevitable in the work of a man who had spent many years in the theatre, but they are not well-made in the sense in which the French dramatists, Scribe and Sardou, made their plays well. Scribe and Sardou were more interested in the mechanics of the drama than in the mystery and motives of it.

But Ibsen was not interested in machinery, except in so far as it enabled him to do his work. Making the machine *was* Sardou's work, but the machine was merely a tool to Ibsen, who constantly used it for purposes to which it was not suitable. He overloaded the machine with mysticism or symbolism, and packed it too tightly with psychology. Sometimes, as in *Peer Gynt,* he rambled and ranged so widely and so long that the machine broke down, as far as actual performance of the play went. But, with these reservations, it may fairly be said that his plays were deftly made.

August Strindberg

Contemporary with Henrik Ibsen was August Strindberg, a Swedish dramatist of overwrought mentality, who was born at Stockholm in 1849. Strindberg is far inferior to Ibsen as a thinker and as an artist, but he is constantly contrasted with him, partly because the one was Norwegian and the other Swedish, but chiefly because of the superficial assumption that Ibsen was a feminist in the political sense, while Strindberg was violently antipathetic to women, although he had married and been divorced from three of them. Strindberg derived his inspirations

from the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who like himself was mentally unbalanced. Sexual dementia prevented Strindberg from regarding a woman as an individual with a right to freedom, and it was because he could not bear to see Nora in *The Doll's House* revolting against the authority of her husband that he became, so it seemed, the antagonist of Ibsen. Ibsen died in 1906, at the age of seventy-eight, and Strindberg died six years later, at the age of sixty-three.

§ 3

Sir Arthur Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones

The drama in England was in a state of serious decline from the period of Goldsmith and Sheridan until the year 1880 or thereabouts, when Mr. (now Sir) Arthur Pinero, a young actor who was born in London in 1855, began to write plays, mostly in the conventional manner. He wrote some farces, such as *The Magistrate,* and some sentimental plays, such as *Sweet Lavender* and *Trelawney of the Wells,* and then, feeling a strong draught from Norway, changed his manner and wrote *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* in which Mrs. Patrick Campbell made her name. This play was followed by a remarkable variety of plays, ranging from *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* and *His House in Order* to *Mid-Channel* and *Thunderbolt, Letty, Iris,* and *The Enchanted Cottage.* There is a greater variety in Sir Arthur's work than in that of most dramatists, and he is certain of a high place among English writers for the theatre.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, who was born in Buckinghamshire in 1851, began his career as a dramatist by writing conventional melodramas, one of which, written in collaboration with Henry Herman and entitled *The Silver King,* is still a very popular piece. It raised melodrama to a higher condition than it had been in for many years, and it won praise from so fastidious a critic as Matthew Arnold. Mr. Jones, who has written over a hundred plays, resembles Sir Arthur Pinero in the variety of his

work, but his intellect is not so powerful as Pinero's, although his dialogue is more natural and his sense of comedy often more brilliant.

George Bernard Shaw

Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Jones raised the English drama from the mud and placed it in a position where it could command respect. They made the way easy for those who were to follow them, and it is doubtful whether Mr. Bernard Shaw, who was born in Dublin in 1856, would have found his way on to the stage at all, hard though it was for him to get there, if these two men had not preceded him. Oscar Wilde, who died in 1900 at the age of forty-four, revived the comedy of wit and manners which had fallen out of use after the death of Sheridan, and his plays, because of the surrounding desolation, seemed more brilliant than in fact they were. Only one of them, *The Importance of Being Earnest,* is on the Sheridan and Congreve level, the rest being paltry melodramas, plastered over with irrelevant epigrams. It was not until 1892 that Mr. Shaw's first play, *Widowers' Houses,* was performed, and it was not a success; indeed, Mr. Shaw did not become popularly known as a dramatist until the years 1904–6, when his work was done at the Court Theatre with great success. He had then written a considerable number of his thirty-nine plays, most of which were familiar in book-form but not on the stage. Some of them, such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* have never publicly been played in England, because of the ban of the Censor. This play, and *Man and Superman, John Bull's Other Island, Major Barbara,* and *The Doctor's Dilemma* are his best work, but all of his plays, even the slightest, are stimulating and full of thought and wit. *Heartbreak House,* a long piece, is immensely interesting and impressive to read. It has never been properly produced in England.

Another play, or another group of five plays which form a pentalogy entitled *Back to Methuselah,* deals with the history

Photo: Stage Photo Co.

THE LAST SCENE FROM "PEER GYNT."

Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem was first published in 1867. Peer Gynt himself is one of the half mystical and fantastical personages in the peasant life of Norway. A typical man of indecision, ever afraid of doing the irretrievable.

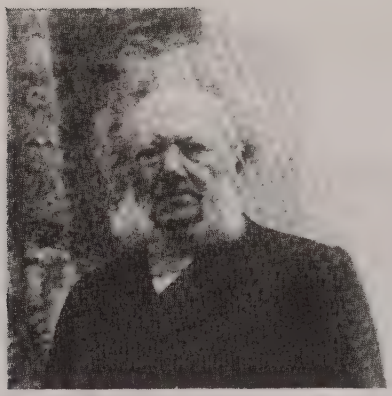

Photo L. L. A.

HENRIK IBSEN.

The father of the modern European drama.

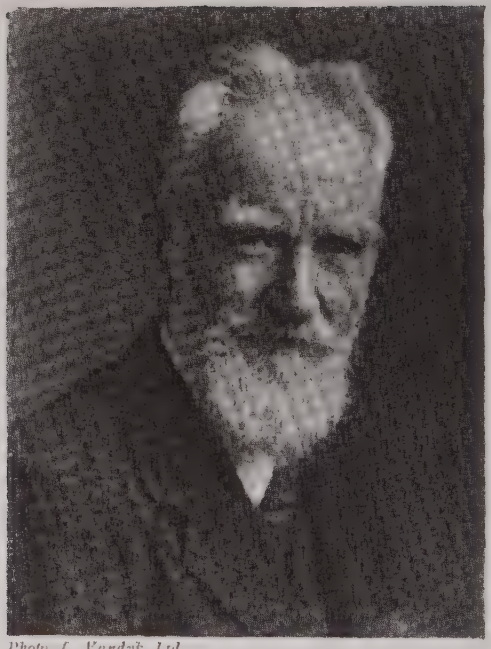

Photo C. Vandyk, Ltd

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

The greatest British dramatist since Sheridan. [illegible] Goldsmith and Shaw are all Irish

of mankind from the time of Adam and Eve until a period set "as far as thought can reach." The whole of Mr. Shaw's work is suffused with his religious theory, that God is an Imperfect Being seeking to make Himself Perfect and using for His purpose any instrument that will serve His purpose. If the instrument is useless or can be superseded by a better one, it is scrapped! This doctrine is most obviously expressed in the one-act play called *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet.* Posnet, a drunken waster who has just escaped hanging for stealing a horse, has received a spiritual shock as great as that received by St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Suddenly God's purpose, as Mr. Shaw understands it, is revealed to Blanco, who announces it to his neighbours in these terms:

> You bet He didn't make us for nothing; and He wouldn't have made us at all if He could have done His work without us. By Gum, that must be what we're for! He'd never have made us to be rotten blackguards like me, and good-for-nothing rips like Feemy. He made me because He had a job for me. He let me run loose till the job was ready; and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. . . .

And later Blanco asserts his morality thus:

> No. No more paths. No more broad and narrow. No more good and bad. There's no good and bad; but by Jimmy, gents, there's a rotten game and there's a great game. I played the rotten game; but the great game was played on me; and now I'm for the great game every time. . . .

Whether there is any real difference between this doctrine and that of Calvin, other than one of detail and terminology—for the difference between *good* and *bad* and *rotten game* and *great game* seems hardly worth discussing—is hard to say, but it is clear that with the advent of Mr. Shaw to the stage we are back again in the region of religion, where the great drama

always begins. In the strictest sense of the word, Mr. Shaw is a writer of religious plays. His wit and intellectual verve and a sort of moral fury which he possesses have enabled him to pass off on audiences a great quantity of argument and doctrinal statement which could hardly have been passed off on them by any one else. His plays are full of lengthy speeches, and they are sometimes actionless. *Getting Married,* for example, is a prolonged debate, while another argumentative piece, *Misalliance,* has actually been described by Mr. Shaw himself as a disquisitive play. Many of his characters are mere mouthpieces for the enunciation of their author's opinions. His later plays have a prolixity which makes them more than usually difficult for the theatre. Nevertheless, the thirty-nine plays he has now written form a more unified body of work than the complete plays of almost any other dramatist.

Practically all the plays written by meritable dramatists at this time in England were of a critical temper. They might even be called sociological pieces. Human society was overhauled and examined by Mr. Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Granville-Barker, the late St. John Hankin (who wrote comedies of manners that were close to the critical manner of Sheridan), and many others. M. Eugène Brieux (extravagantly described by Mr. Shaw as "the most important dramatist west of Russia who had confronted Europe" since the death of Ibsen) in France, and a very large number of dramatists in Germany, were all engaged in this dramatic criticism of social systems. In Russia, a remarkable man of genius, Anton Chekhov, was writing plays, such as *The Cherry Orchard,* which were uncanny in the clairvoyant precision with which the fall of society, as it then existed, was depicted.

Sir James Barrie

Unique among all these sociological dramatists was the figure of Sir James Barrie, whose best work is in his plays and

who has contented himself with telling fantastic and sometimes sentimental stories, although even he could not keep himself entirely free from the temper of his time, for his best play, *The Admirable Crichton,* is a definite criticism of society, and another, *Little Mary,* is as nearly in the manner of M. Brieux and Mr. Shaw as it is ever possible for a play by Sir James to be. The War stirred him to a mystical mood out of which came the strange play, *Mary Rose.* But, on the whole, he was content to deal in fantasy and sentiment and a whimsical wisdom about human things. Sir James Barrie's great discovery is that it is the mother woman who really matters in the world and his philosophy is summarised in his masterpiece of fooling, *Peter Pan.* Life is an adventure, and to the man who understands life, death must be an awfully fine adventure too.

Other work of Sir James Barrie will be considered more appropriately in a later chapter.

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XXXVIII

ENGLISH POETRY SINCE SWINBURNE

By Gilbert Thomas

ENGLISH POETRY SINCE SWINBURNE

By Gilbert Thomas

THE last of the great Victorians, Swinburne, died at Putney in 1909. Like other and lesser Victorians, he continued to write well into the new century. But his influence reached its zenith with the publication of the Third Series of *Poems and Ballads* in 1889. In 1892 Tennyson "crossed the bar," and it is, therefore, about the year 1890 that the great book of Victorian poetry may be said to have closed, and that of "modern" poetry to have opened. William Watson maintained the Tennysonian tradition, giving us poems rich in chiselled beauty, of which, perhaps, his *Wordsworth's Grave* is deservedly the best known.

Here are some stanzas from it, which either as criticism or as poetry are worthy of the subject, which is the highest praise that can be given:

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave!
  When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
  The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine;
  Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine;
  Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
  For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—
  Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

The most obvious form of revolt against Tennysonian standards was to be found in the narrower and more self-conscious

"literary" circles of the 'Nineties, among a group of poets who, together with artists like Aubrey Beardsley, are often referred to as the "decadents." Much of their work appeared in the periodical volumes of *The Yellow Book*. For these writers who were much influenced by Oscar Wilde, poetry ceased to be a vehicle for the expression of the noblest passions and aspirations of humanity, and became instead a mirror in a stuffy and heavily-scented drawing-room, before which, to their own admiration and that of their friends, they paraded themselves in various "æsthetic" and erotic poses.

§ 1

Francis Thompson

The greatest poet whom the eighteen-nineties produced was for a long time almost unknown. A few discerning critics hailed with enthusiasm Francis Thompson's first volume of *Poems* in 1893; but not until after his death in 1907 did his work have more than a slender sale. Thompson's inspiration came from deep springs of rich inner experience, which was only intensified by the bitter circumstances of his outward life. If ever a poet "learned in suffering what he taught in song," that poet was Francis Thompson. He was born in 1859 at Preston. His father was a doctor. Like Shelley, on whom he wrote a great essay, Thompson was a shy, dreamy boy, and was very unhappy at school. In 1878 he was sent to study medicine at Manchester. But, when he should have been learning anatomy, he was reading poetry at the Public Library. As the years went by, and he repeatedly failed in his examinations, the patience of his indulgent, but undiscerning, father, to whom Thompson had never confided his literary ambitions, was exhausted, and the poet was left to fend for himself. With a poor constitution still further weakened by laudanum, to which he had taken after a severe illness—he partly overcame the habit in later years—he reached London without money and with volumes of Blake and Æschylus for his main luggage. In rags he tramped the streets. He slept

on the Embankment at nights. He earned odd pence as a boot-black. He sold matches and newspapers on the kerb. In 1887, when hope seemed to be quite dead, he offered several manuscripts to Wilfrid Meynell, who was editing a magazine called *Merrie England.* Mr. Meynell, when he came to read them, was immediately struck by their quality, and sent for their author, who eventually appeared in the editorial room "more ragged and unkempt than the ordinary beggar, with no shirt beneath his coat, and bare feet in broken shoes." The sequel to that visit is one of the romances of modern literary history. Thompson, after much persuasion, was induced to accept the hospitality of Wilfrid Meynell and his wife Alice, whose own verse, though slight in bulk and lacking popular appeal, is in its own austere way among the greatest of modern poetry. In the shelter of the Meynells' home Thompson remained until his death. When at length his fame was established, his father, seeing his name coupled with that of Shelley or Tennyson, exclaimed: "If the lad had but told me!"

Francis Thompson is one of the greatest mystical poets in the English language. Simple indeed he was in spirit; he loved children, and himself possessed the child heart. But his love for long and strange and sometimes invented words increasingly robbed his work of simplicity of form, and some of his later poems are almost unintelligible. His best verse does not fill more than a small "selected" volume, but poems like *The Hound of Heaven,* the *Ode to the Setting Sun,* and *The Poppy* are imperishable. Never has the Divine Love that pursues men, even when they seek to flee from it, been visualised with greater power or wealth of imagery than in *The Hound of Heaven,* with its majestic opening lines:

> I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
> I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped
And shot, precipited
Adown Titanic glooms or chasmèd fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

There are snatches of Thompson that must haunt the memory of every reader from the moment he first meets with them, such as:

The innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.

But the poem, perhaps, which best reveals his spirit, as it wandered lonely through the London streets, is one entitled *The Kingdom of God,* which was found among his papers after death.

Most of Thompson's poems were written before the close of the century, though his fame was to come later.

W. E. Henley

The reputations, on the other hand, of several poets who enjoyed success in the 'Nineties have since then faded in varying degrees. W. E. Henley, who was also a critic and a great editor, wrote some vivid hospital verses from his own experience as a patient in the Edinburgh Infirmary. He had the power of describing a character in a few lines, and his surgeons, doctors, and nurses actually live upon the printed page. He used the same gift in painting the portraits, physical and spiritual, of some of the famous men who were his friends, an excellent example of his skill in this rare art being his sonnet on Robert Louis Stevenson. He bore much suffering with fortitude, and could justly say:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,

Photo Faulkham & Banfield, Ltd.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

One of England's most noteworthy living poets.

Photo: Elliott & Fry, Ltd

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

One of the greatest English poets since Swinburne, whose tragic life is told in the text

I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Beneath the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Henley's poems have recently been reissued, and his fame shows a well-merited tendency to revive. The same cannot be said of Stephen Phillips, whose reputation, a great one twenty-five years ago, suffered almost complete eclipse before his death, at the age of fifty-one, in 1915. Another poet who has fallen into undeserved neglect is John Davidson, whose *Fleet Street Eclogues* and *Ballads,* published in the 'Nineties, enjoyed a considerable vogue. Davidson's work, though very uneven, was often vigorous and picturesque. He was, like many greater poets, essentially a moralist—something, it has been truly said, of "a muscular Christian." He had a robust faith in human personality, and was perpetually at warfare with the cramping conventions and the evil social conditions that warp the development of the individual soul. Melancholy clouded the latter years of his lonely life at Penzance, near which place he drowned himself in 1909.

§ 2

W. B. Yeats

W. B. Yeats is Ireland's greatest poet, and he has for many years past been assured of an immortality of fame. He has had the distinction of being awarded (in 1923) the Nobel Prize for Literature. Nothing that he has done has been accomplished by chance, but by inspired imagining and the most exquisite

handicraft. The poet is aware of his own mission, and has written this testament of it: "I must leave my myths and symbols," he has said, "to explain themselves as the years go by and one poem lights up another. . . . I would, if I could, add to that majestic heraldry of the poets, that great and complicated inheritance of images which written literature has substituted for the greater and more complex inheritance of spoken tradition, some new heraldic images gathered from the lips of the common people. Christianity and the old nature faith have lain down side by side in the cottages, and I would proclaim that peace as loudly as I can among the kingdoms of poetry, where there is no peace that is not joyous, no battle that does not give life instead of death."

Readers who know little of Yeats are familiar with *The Lake Island of Innisfree,* one of the most exquisite poems in the English language.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone on the bee-loud glade.

. . . . .

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavement's gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

In the magic of the little play *The Land of Heart's Desire,* there is a song that has all the Irish fairyland in it, with its sorrow and gladness:

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely heart,
And the lonely heart is withered away,
While the fairies dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;

For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
And I heard a reed of Coolaney say:
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart must wither away."

§ 3

John Masefield

But for Mr. Rudyard Kipling's influence, we should not have had John Masefield, one of the greatest of contemporary poets. We may dislike Kipling's excesses, but we have to admit that it was his vigorous spirit which first brought down the Muse from its shy retreat upon Parnassus into the common life of the market-place. In more recent years poetry had been kept in comparative seclusion. Certain subjects, certain aspects of life, were held to be "poetical"; but the rough-and-tumble, every-day life of ordinary men and women was not one of them. Mr. Kipling revolutionised that view, and others were to follow him who should seek the market-place because, behind and within its vulgarities, they knew much of the finest gold of human character and fellowship to be hidden. Of these was John Masefield, who was born in 1874, and who as a boy ran away to sea, where he served before the mast. His earliest books were small volumes of "salt-water ballads," full of the true brine:

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

Some readers prefer this, his earlier, style, but for the majority Masefield's most significant work is probably to be found in the long narrative poems that he has given us in later years. Of these, the first was *The Everlasting Mercy*, which aroused a storm of controversy when it appeared in the *English Review* in

1911. Because it struck a new note in poetry, some of the more conservative critics said that it was not poetry at all. But the critics have vanished into the oblivion of the newspaper files, and *The Everlasting Mercy* remains—one of the greatest poems the present century has produced. The story it tells is a simple one. It describes the "conversion" of a village blackguard. It describes it, however, not merely from the outside, but, with rare spiritual sympathy, from the inside, so that we are ourselves able to share the emotions of a darkened soul finding the light. At first, in verse of ruthless realism, we are shown Saul Kane as he originally is—a coarse, sensual, drunken prize-fighter, who cannot even poach in a sportsmanlike spirit, but must needs trespass on the recognised "preserves" of a friend:

> Now when he saw me set that snare—
> He tells me "Get to Hell from there.
> This field is mine," he says, "by right;
> If you poach here, there'll be a fight.
> Out now," he says, "and quit my wire—
> It's mine." . . . "It ain't." . . . "You put."
> "You liar."
> "You closhy put." . . . "You bloody liar."

But even in Saul Kane there is a latent spark of good, and one night it is fanned by a Quaker lady missioner who visits "The Lion," where he is drinking. Here is the beginning of his transformation:

> From three long hours of gin and smokes,
> And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes',
> A warmish night and windows shut,
> The room stank like a fox's gut . . .
> Jane slept beside me in the chair,
> And I got up—I wanted air.
>
> I opened window wide and leaned
> Out of that pigsty of the fiend,
> And felt a cool wind go like grace
> About the sleeping market-place.

The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy . . .
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,
And summat made me think of things.

And so, a reborn man, Kane goes forth along the open road; and, as the sun comes up through the mist with the infinite promise of a new day, the sound of an early plough upon the hillside, and the song of the first lark soaring into the silent heavens, and even the very noise of a railway engine shunting are blended into one glorious symphony of regeneration:

O Christ who holds the open gate,
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter
Of holy white birds following after,
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,
And Thou will bring the young green corn,
The young green corn divinely springing,
The young green corn for ever singing;
And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessèd feet shall glitter there,
And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the golden harvest's yield,
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

In *The Widow in the Bye Street, Dauber,* and *The Daffodil Fields,* Mr. Masefield, in Spenserian stanzas, has written other long narrative poems, which throw the beauty of what might be upon the dark screen of what is. The finest of his later poems is *Reynard the Fox.* This galloping poem, rich in the sights and sounds and scent of the English countryside, describes a day's fox-hunting. The first part presents a series of little sketches of the motley crowd attending the hunt, and not since Chaucer's pilgrims set forth upon the shining road to Canterbury have we had in poetry an array of figures so varied, so living,

and so thoroughly English. The second part of the poem, which is full of poignant emotion, follows the fluctuating fortunes of the hunt itself, and its freshness and virtue lie in the fact that the chase is described, in the main, not from the hunter's, but from the fox's, point of view.

§ 4

Other Poets

Masefield's first book appeared in 1902. In the same year was published the earliest volume of Alfred Noyes. He was twenty-two when *The Loom of Years* was issued, and by the time he was thirty two closely printed volumes of *Collected Poems* stood to his name. The sale of his books in England, and still more in America, which he has eight times visited on reading tours, has reached a figure which some popular novelists might envy. Noyes's music is often his own, but spiritually he belongs to the Victorians.

The year 1902 also saw the publication of the earliest book by Walter de la Mare, who was born in 1873. Mr. de la Mare is limited in range, but his poetry, more than any since Coleridge, has the elusive quality of magic, and in the opinion of many critics he is surer of immortality than any other English poet now writing. Beauty for him is always touched with a wistful sadness:

Very old are we men;
  Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
  By Eve's nightingales;

We wake and whisper awhile,
  But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
  Of Amaranth lie.

When, in 1914, the Great War broke out, there was immediately a "boom" in poetry. There were two phases of the War.

Firstly, there was the period of crusading faith and high ideals. Then there was the time of weariness and disillusion. The poetry of the War reflected these two phases. Rupert Brooke, with his beautiful form and face, was the radiant embodiment of the first phase. He was born at Rugby, where his father was a schoolmaster, in 1887. After taking his degree at Cambridge, he lived for a time at Grantchester, about which he wrote one of the most delightful of his pre-War poems. He travelled widely, and in 1914 obtained a commission in the Royal Naval Division, with which he served at Antwerp. In 1915 he was sent to the Dardanelles, became ill, and died at Scyros on April 23. Some of his earlier poems like *The Fish* and *Dining-room Tea* would in any case have won him a secure reputation; but his name will always be associated most memorably with the five well-known sonnets written in the first months of the War, and perfectly enshrining the spirit in which the volunteers of 1914 and 1915 entered the trenches:

> Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
> And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
> With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
> To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
> Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
> Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
> And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
> And all the little emptiness of love!

Among the finest flowers of the post-War garden, besides those already mentioned, the names must be included of J. C. Squire and John Drinkwater. Mr. Drinkwater, who has written many beautiful songs about his native Cotswold country, is now engaged on a long series of narrative and lyrical poems dealing with human love in all its manifold aspects.

Mr. W. H. Davies, Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, Mr. Wilfred Wilson Gibson, Mr. Gordon Bottomley, and Mr. Harold Munroe are all poets with genuine inspiration whose work has in it the promise of permanence.

In this brief survey of modern English poetry we have perforce followed only the highways. There are many byways that might profitably be explored if space permitted. Two singers who have enjoyed a well-merited popularity out of all proportion to the slight bulk of their work are A. E. Housman and Ralph Hodgson. Housman, who is a Professor of Latin at Cambridge, published in 1895 a sheaf of songs called *A Shropshire Lad,* in which beauty and regret were mingled in measures whose rare fascination many have vainly tried to analyse and imitate. After a silence of twenty-seven years, he published in 1922 his second, and apparently final, volume entitled *Last Poems.* Ralph Hodgson's productiveness has been equally small, but for sheer lyrical ecstasy his *Song of Honour* is unmatched in modern verse.

In 1915 James Elroy Flecker died of consumption in Switzerland. He was born in 1884, and having studied Oriental languages at Cambridge, went in 1910 to Constantinople in the Consular Service. The East made a deep impression upon him, and Eastern colour, splendour, and imagery entered largely into his work. This comes out strongly in his drama *Hassan,* and attains perhaps its highest point in the Chorus of Pilgrims with which it concludes:

> Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,
> Where shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
> When softly through the silence beat the bells
> Along the golden road to Samarkand.

A poet who can write like this has a gift of lyric music which amounts to genius.

Dr. Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, is a Doctor in a double sense, being a Doctor of Literature of Oxford and a Physician—he was at different times attached to St. Bartholomew's, to the Children's Hospital, and to the Great Northern. His poetry is that of a profound scholar, and is full of interesting experiments in classical metres applied to English verse. His

prosody, indeed, is so original that the ordinary reader, who finds himself without a clue, often fails to make it scan. Much of it, on the other hand, especially in *Shorter Poems,* is as simple, sweet, and satisfying as almost anything in verse.

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XXXIX

LATER DAY WRITERS

LATER DAY WRITERS

§ 1

G. K. Chesterton

MR. GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON was born in Kensington in 1874. His first conspicuous book, his study of Browning, was published in 1904. Since then he has written several volumes of poems and essays, fantastic romances of which *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* and *The Flying Inn* are the most remarkable, volumes about America and Palestine, literary criticisms of which his *Dickens* is the most important, a remarkable *Short History of England,* and a characteristic study of St. Francis. Mr. Chesterton is intensely English, and his love for England finds fine expression in *The Ballad of the White Horse.*

Mr. Chesterton has been called a topsy-turvy philosopher. Certainly he revels in exaggeration and in paradox; certainly he sees only what he intends to see. He made a journey to Palestine, and his description of it is a history of the Crusades. He believes in the tremendous importance of an independent peasantry, and practically all that he saw in Ireland was such a peasantry. Indeed, he himself has said: "I have never managed to lose my old conviction that travel narrows the mind." In his book *Orthodoxy* Mr. Chesterton says: "Mere light sophistry is the thing that I happen to despise most of all things, and it is perhaps a wholesome fact that this is the thing of which I am generally accused." This sentence shows that Mr. Chesterton is aware

that a number of his readers and critics have some sort of quarrel with his writings; but does he not mistake that quarrel?

It may be well to consider a few examples of Mr. Chesterton's characteristic methods of reasoning, and to ask how far his brilliance in attack leads us on to conviction. In the second chapter of *Orthodoxy* he enunciates the typical paradox that madness is bred by self-confident rationality. His words are these:

> Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not go mad; chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom. I am not, as will be seen, in any sense attacking logic; I only say that the danger does lie in logic, not in imagination. Artistic paternity is as wholesome as physical paternity.

Large propositions of this kind require formal statement and formal support. Denying them both, Mr. Chesterton offers us only a rhetorical expansion of his parodox. Having declared that poets do not go mad, he promptly adduces two who did. But it seems that when poets go mad it is not because they are poetical, but because they have "a weak spot of rationality!" Poe, according to Mr. Chesterton, went mad because he was specially analytical, and even preferred draughts to the "romantic knights and castles" of chess. Cowper, we are told, was "definitely driven mad by logic, by the ugly and alien logic of predestination." But was he? Cowper's madness ultimately took the form of religious melancholia, but it began before his conversion to Evangelicalism, in a worldly environment in his Temple chambers. As Goldwin Smith carefully points out, the root of Cowper's malady was purely physical; only its development was religious. Then Mr. Chesterton makes it a strong point that Cowper is the *"only one great English poet"* who has lost his reason. What is the argumentative value of such a statement? How

many poets who can be described as both "English" and "great," have there been? A dozen, twenty? The total is small, and it is at the mercy of the term "great." Yet it must be agreed upon before Mr. Chesterton's statement can have any statistical significance whatever.

Mr. Chesterton's love of fairy-land and its beautifully fortuitous happenings is delightful. But when he calls these happenings philosophical, and the laws of Nature unphilosophical, we know that he ought to have been writing fantastic poetry. He says:

> All the terms used in the science books, "law," "necessity," "order," "tendency," and so on, are really unintellectual, because they assume an inner synthesis which we do not possess.

But we do possess a synthesis, which is no more than a consistent putting together of available data. It is from facts and observations thus put together that we deduce law, order, and tendency. The process is highly intellectual, and to dismiss it in favour of the charms and enchantments of fairy-land is to play with the reader. Mr. Chesterton says:

> A forlorn lover might be unable to dissociate the moon from lost love; so the materialist is unable to dissociate the moon from the tide. In both cases there is no connection, except that one has seen them together.

An amazing analogy! Forlorn love has been seen everywhere, even under the lamp-posts of Bloomsbury; but the tide has observed an established relation to the moon. Of course, Mr. Chesterton knows this. What he wishes to insinuate is that the mere abstract possibility that a tide shall rise to-morrow to contradict the behaviour of all observed tides is more inspiring to contemplate than any amount of scientific certainty. Prodigal of simile, he continues:

> So the materialist professor (though he conceals his tears) is yet a sentimentalist, because, by a dark association of his own, apple-blossoms remind him of apples. But the cool rationalist from fairy-land does not see why . . . apple-trees should not grow crimson tulips!

Of what value is this? Probably Mr. Chesterton loves fairy-tales too well to understand their purpose. They were invented to help children to realise life, not to help men to understand it, though they sometimes do both.

It may be said that Mr. Chesterton's illustrations are not his argument. The misfortune is that they are often more than half his argument, and that in the rushing and radiant stream of his ideas they are apt to pass as valid when they are not.

Mr. Chesterton may be said to write in flashes of lightning, but time and reflection are needed to decide how much of his lightning is "fork" and how much is "sheet."

It may be that the voice of "G. K. C." is in this modern scientific world of ours as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but none the less it is masculine, insistent, and tuneful.

It is all these in his beautiful little poem:

THE DONKEY

When fishes flew and forests walked,
  And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood,
  Then surely I was born:

With monstrous head and sickening cry
  And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
  On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
  Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me. I am dumb,
  I keep my secret still.

Photo: L. Caswall Smith.

H G WELLS

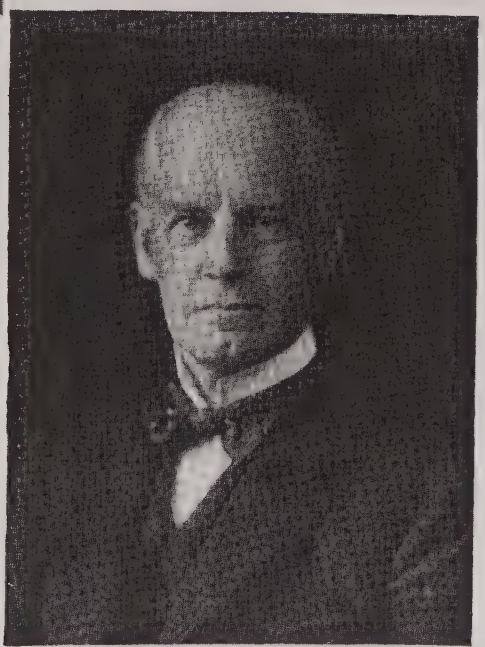

Photo: C. Vandyk, Ltd.

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

The author of the great epic, *The Forsyte Saga*

Photo. E. O. Hoppé.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

The novelist of the "Five Towns."

Photo: T. & R. Annan & Sons.

JOSEPH CONRAD.

Born a Pole, now one of the finest English stylists of his age.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet.
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

§ 2

Hilaire Belloc

Mr. Hilaire Belloc is the son of a French father. He was born in 1870 and was educated at the Oratory school, Edgbaston, and Balliol College, Oxford. Mr. Belloc was born a Roman Catholic. For a short time he was a Liberal Member of Parliament. But the Puritanism of Liberalism antagonised him, and he regards with apprehension the continual encroachment on individual liberty wrought by modern social legislation, which he insists is in effect the bullying of the poor by the well-to-do. In his book *The Servile State* Mr. Belloc insists that Capitalism, which he dislikes, must necessarily be followed by semi-slavery, which he dislikes still more. Like Mr. Chesterton, he rejects all modern nostrums for social diseases. He denounces both the doctrines of Karl Marx and the practice of Herr Stinnes. He is convinced that the one hope for the world is a return to the old faith, and that the one power that can conceivably establish genuine internationalism and save mankind from continued war is the Catholic Church. Again, like Mr. Chesterton, he is a mediævalist in so far as he believes that the common man in Europe was happier in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than he has been since. But neither is a mediævalist like Walter Pater or Ruskin, who, to quote Mr. Chesterton, "would pay to a church feast every sort of compliment except feasting."

Mr. Belloc published his first book, *Verses and Sonnets,* in 1895.

The grace of his verse is well illustrated by the following:

Sally is gone that was so kindly,
Sally is gone from Ha'nacker Hill.

And the Briar grows ever since then so blindly
And ever since then the clapper is still,
And the sweeps have fallen from Ha'nacker Mill.

Ha'nacker Hill is in Desolation:
Ruin a-top and a field unploughed.
And Spirits that call on a fallen nation,
Spirits that loved her calling aloud:
Spirits abroad in a windy cloud.

Spirits that call and no one answers:
Ha'nacker's down and England's done.
Wind and Thistle for pipe and dancers
And never a ploughman under the Sun.
Never a ploughman. Never a one.

Mr. Belloc has written novels, nonsense stories, admirable travel books, and much acute military criticism.

The list shows a most remarkable versatility and range of talent. Among his serious works of history the biographies of Danton and of Robespierre stand out as character-studies amazingly vivid and alive. In fiction his best novel is, beyond doubt, *Emmanuel Burden,* a book full of humour and satire. These are the qualities which distinguish also his various volumes of miscellaneous Essays, of which *Caliban's Guide to Letters,* with its ironical advice to authors, is perhaps the most entertaining. But the best of all his writing is to be found in his books of travel, of which *The Path to Rome,* the narrative of a tramp afoot, is as delightful as Stevenson's *Travel with a Donkey;* with that book, indeed, it has much in common—the same happy knack of picture-painting scenes and people, the humour, the gay philosophy of life, together with a rare gift for making the reader feel as if he were his companion in adventure.

§ 3

John Galsworthy

John Galsworthy was born in 1867, was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and was called to the Bar in 1890. He had

travelled widely and it was on a sailing-ship voyaging from Adelaide to South Africa in 1894 that he made friends with a sailor called Joseph Conrad, who showed him the manuscript of his first novel, *Almayer's Folly,* and was persuaded by him to send it to a publisher. In appearance and in mind, Mr. Galsworthy is a lawyer. He is cautious, restrained, and dignified. Though he has immense sympathy with suffering and is disturbed by social inequalities, he is always judicial, always calm, examining but not denouncing, eager to understand situations and characters that are most antipathetic to him.

John Galsworthy has written many novels; three of these, and two long short stories, have been bound into one complete Saga of a family. *The Forsyte Saga* is the perfect shining treasure of contemporary fiction. In pure, beautiful unaffected English, Galsworthy gathers into his magic net three generations of a large upper middle-class family during the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the average man believed that property was inviolable, and extended its clutch over the very soul of beauty. The Saga ends in these queer upset questioning times, when property is all men's and no men's, and the youngsters, refusing to accept the old intolerant code of respectability and principles, have still not yet formed new and perhaps better laws to replace it; have, indeed, not yet made up their minds whether laws and a code are altogether necessary. The Forsytes, old and young, their business and their loves and their very furniture, and the subtle effects of one upon the other, are mainly visualised from the point of view of Soames Forsyte, of the second generation. Nobody can touch us to pity like Galsworthy; and the final proof of this is that at the end of the Saga we cannot but spare pity for Soames, who in old-fashioned melodrama would have been accompanied by a lurid green limelight to mark him as the villain. And yet no very drastic punishment has been meted out to this dastard, this man of property, except to leave him standing, bewildered and lonely, among the ruins

of a shattered tradition. If it be true that universal history can be contained on a small scale, in the true chronicles of one family, then here we have it—incomplete like life itself, for the Forsytes are still going on, outside the book, marrying and breeding and educating their children and adjusting their prejudices.

The Forsyte Saga is the great achievement of Mr. Galsworthy's literary career. It demonstrates his essential pessimism. He is compassionate and always sympathetic, but he is also almost hopeless. As a writer, never for a moment does he let himself get out of hand. He is always restrained. Yet this very restraint enables him at times vividly to suggest the passion that is affecting his creations. There is a scene in *The Man of Property,* the first part of *The Forsyte Saga,* which illustrates this power. Irene has returned to her husband after having met Bosinney, her lover:

> He hardly recognised her. She seemed on fire, so deep and rich the colour of her cheeks, her eyes, and lips, and of the unusual blouse she wore. She was breathing fast and deep, as though she had been running, and with every breath perfume seemed to come from her hair, and from her body, like perfume from an opening flower. . . . He lifted his finger towards her breast, but she dashed his hand aside. "Don't touch me!" she cried. He caught her wrist; she wrenched it away. "And where have you been?" he asked. "In heaven—out of this house!" With those words she fled upstairs. . . .
>
> And Soames stood motionless. What prevented him from following her? Was it that, with the eyes of faith, he saw Bosinney looking down from that high window in Sloane Street, straining his eyes for yet another glimpse of Irene's vanished figure, cooling his flushed face, dreaming of the moment when she flung herself on his breast—the scent of her still in the air around and the sound of her laugh that was like a sob?

The author's sympathies are unquestionably with Irene, but in her world he knows that property is supreme. It tramples on love and overwhelms passion. Irene is forced back to her husband and to the soul-destroying slavery against which she has ineffectively revolted:

> Huddled in her grey fur against the sofa-cushions, she had a strange resemblance to a captive owl, bunched in its soft feathers against the wires of a cage. The supple erectness of her figure was gone, as though she had been broken by cruel exercise; as though there were no longer any reason for being beautiful, and supple, and erect.

After *The Forsyte Saga, Fraternity* is the greatest of the Galsworthy novels. It has something of the hopelessness of Russian fiction. Men are the helpless toys of fate. To quote Mr. Galsworthy:

> Like flies caught among the impalpable and smoky threads of cobwebs, so men struggle in the webs of their own natures, giving here a start, there a pitiful small jerking, long sustained, and falling into stillness. Enmeshed they were born, enmeshed they die, fighting according to their strength to the end; to fight in the hope of freedom, their joy; to die, knowing they are beaten, their reward.

In addition to his novels, Mr. Galsworthy has written many short stories and several plays. The plays are well constructed and eminently actable, and are always concerned with some social or moral problem. In *Strife,* Mr. Galsworthy is concerned with the struggle between employer and employed; in *Justice,* he indicts the law's method of dealing with the more pitiful type of criminal; in *The Silver Box* and *The Eldest Son,* the theme is that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor; and so on. Always Mr. Galsworthy feels the cruelty of life. He diagnoses, but he suggests no remedies. Always he is sedate, calm, judicial, well-bred, a great literary artist, but extraordin-

arily true to his class—the English upper middle-class, the class of the lawyers and the doctors and the professors.

§ 4

H. G. Wells

There could be no greater contrast than that which exists between Mr. John Galsworthy and Mr. H. G. Wells. In most of the great controversies of our times the two men are on the same side, but while Galsworthy will always struggle to see his opponent's point of view, and will insist that he shall be treated courteously and justly, H. G. Wells, as has been well said, "has no other idea but to hit the enemy over the head with a club." Temperamentally H. G. Wells is a tempestuous fighter.

He was born in 1866, and he has himself told the story of his early years:

> I was born in that queer indefinite class that we call in England the middle class. I am not a bit aristocratic; I do not know of any of my ancestors beyond my grandparents, and about them I do not know very much, because I am the youngest son of my father and mother, and their parents were all dead before I was born.
>
> My mother was the daughter of an innkeeper at a place named Midhurst, who supplied post-horses to the coaches before the railways came; my father was the son of the head-gardener of Lord de Lisle at Penshurst Castle, in Kent. They had various changes of fortune and position; for the most of his life my father kept a little shop in a suburb of London, and eked out his resources by playing a game called cricket, which is not only a pastime, but a show which people will pay to see, and which, therefore, affords a living for professional players. His shop was unsuccessful, and my mother, who had once been a lady's maid, became, when I was twelve years old, housekeeper in a large country house.
>
> I, too, was destined to be a shopkeeper. I left school at thirteen for that purpose. I was apprenticed first to be

a chemist, and, that proving unsatisfactory, to a draper. But after a year or so it became evident to me that the facilities for higher education that were and still are constantly increasing in England, offered me better chances in life than a shop and comparative illiteracy could do; and so I struggled for and got various grants and scholarships that enabled me to study and to take a degree in science and some mediocre honours in the new and now great and growing University of London.

After I had graduated I taught biology for two or three years and then became a journalist, partly because it is a more remunerative profession in England than teaching, but partly also because I had always taken the keenest interest in writing English. Some little kink in my mind had always made the writing of prose very interesting to me.

I began first to write literary articles, criticisms, and so forth, and presently short imaginative stories in which I made use of the teeming suggestions of modern science. There is a considerable demand for this sort of fiction in Great Britain and America, and my first book, *The Time Machine,* published in 1895, attracted considerable attention; and with two of its successors, *The War of the Worlds* and *The Invisible Man,* gave me a sufficient popularity to enable me to devote myself exclusively, and with a certain sense of security, to purely literary work.

Mr. H. G. Wells' writings fall into well-defined classes. He began with a series of highly imaginative romances in which he made use of "the teeming suggestions of modern science." *The Time Machine, The Wonderful Visit, The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Wheels of Chance, The Invisible Man, The War of the Worlds, When the Sleeper Awakes, The First Men in the Moon,* and *The Food of the Gods* were all written in the first ten years of his literary life, to be followed later by *The War in the Air* and *The War that will End War.* The early scientific stories preceded the first of his romantic stories, *Love and Mr. Lewisham,* which was published in 1900. *Kipps* was published

in 1905. *Tono Bungay* in 1909, and *Mr. Polly* in 1910. His reputation as a novelist depended mainly on these four books, and to a lesser degree on *Ann Veronica, The New Machiavelli,* and *Marriage,* and it is interesting to note that five of the seven novels were published between 1908 and 1912, which, regarding Mr. Wells as a literary artist, has so far been the most successful period of his life. His two other pre-War romances, *The Passionate Friends* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harmon,* are less significant.

Henry James described *Kipps* as "the first intelligently and consistently ironic or satiric novel." Incidentally both it and *Love and Mr. Lewisham* are criticisms of the social arrangements and conventions that entail waste of opportunity and loss of happiness. Mr. Lewisham is an ill-paid schoolmaster, Kipps is a draper's assistant. Many of the incidents in both novels are autobiographical, and both of them are chapters in the tragedy of waste. "I was thinking," Kipps says, "jest what a rum go everything is." It is clear that Mr. Wells wants to convince us that everything need not and ought not to be a rum go.

Tono Bungay is the masterful epic of modern quackery. Mr. Wells has said that his intention was "to give a view of the whole strange advertising civilisation of which London is the centre." The first two-thirds of the novel are vastly superior to the last third, but in its analysis of the leisured, rather futile life of country houses, the sordid piety of the struggling tradesman, the flamboyant adventures of the advertising quack, it is a great achievement, certainly one of the most important half-dozen novels that have been written since the beginning of this century. Mr. Wells has nothing but scorn for the society that permits great fortunes to be made by quackery, but it is not only in questions of commerce and finance that the world has gone astray. "Love, like everything else in this immense process of social disorganisation in which we live, is a thing adrift, a fruitless thing broken away from its connection."

Ann Veronica is the story of the revolting daughter, told with many scenes of extremely robust passion. *The New Machiavelli* is largely concerned with politics and is also a courageous study of the tremendous power of sexual love.

Many competent critics agree that *The History of Mr. Polly,* slight as it is, is Mr. Wells' masterpiece. Mr. Polly was born with the soul of an artist, but fate compelled him to be an unsuccessful hosier in a small seaside town, to be married to a stupid incapable wife, and to be a martyr to indigestion as the result of her bad cooking. Despite the hosier's shop, despite his wife, and despite his indigestion, Mr. Polly firmly believed that "somewhere—magically inaccessible perhaps but still somewhere—were pure, easy, and joyous states of body and mind," and at last Mr. Polly magnificently revolted, finding, after many adventures, peace and health for himself, and leaving his wife no worse off and no more unhappy than she was when he was with her. There is a sustained humour in *The History of Mr. Polly* not to be found in any other of the Wells novels. The characters are Dickensian, though the philosophy is Mr. Wells' own.

Mr. Wells is a writer of enormous energy and industry, and in the years when he was most prolific as a journalist he worked out his social philosophy in a series of books of which *Anticipations,* published in 1901, was the first. Before the War he was already dreaming of a world-state which would make wars impossible and would ensure a measure of happiness for the least gifted of its citizens.

H. G. Wells as Prophet and Teacher

In 1916 Mr. Wells published *Mr. Britling Sees It Through,* in which he records the fears and feelings of the liberal-minded English middle class during the Great War. Mr. Britling in his essentials is Mr. Wells, and the author is describing a stage in his own spiritual progress when he makes Mr. Britling declare

that the splendid heroism of the young men of all nations who were killed in the war has "shown us God." *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* was followed by *The Soul of a Bishop* and *Joan and Peter,* in a sense the intellectual and spiritual sequels of *Mr. Britling Sees It Through,* and the new faith evident in these novels is elaborated in *God the Invisible King.*

Mr. Wells' most important achievement in the years since the War is without question *The Outline of History,* one of the most important characteristics of which is the constant emphasis of the links that have always existed between the various peoples of the earth. *The Outline of History* was written as a step towards bringing about the future World-State with which Mr. Wells is obsessed. And he does not dream quite without faith. "Brotherhood through sorrow," he declares, "sorrow for common sufferings and for irreparable mutual injuries, is spreading and increasing throughout the world."

Mr. Wells could have been, has been indeed, a master of literature; but for awhile, in his novels, though not in his histories, he has sacrificed style, lucidity, his ideals of an artistic perfection, and the sunset-and-evening star aftermath that such striving must bring, to stumble after a sterner and more impersonal call. Unheeding the advice, "To thine own self be true," he is working out the creed: "Never mind about being true to oneself. What does it matter whether you are a great artist or not? Somebody somewhere is not being fairly treated. See to it."

§ 5

Arnold Bennett

Mr. Arnold Bennett was born in 1867. He was employed for a short time in a lawyer's office, which he abandoned for journalism. He lived for a while in Paris, and French influence is very evident in his art. His first novel was published in 1898. Mr. Arnold Bennett was born in the Potteries; again and again he uses them as a setting for his novels, until we feel we know

the exact hours of the train service between Hanbridge and Bursley. *Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways, These Twain, Anna of the Five Towns,* and the delicious biography of ironic humour *The Card* all belong to the Five Towns series, as does that undoubted masterpiece *The Old Wives' Tale,* the life-story of the two daughters of a draper in the latter half of the Victorian era. One sister, Sophia, the bold adventurer, eloped to Paris and lived there throughout the siege. The other, Constance, lived on in the Five Towns, absorbed in monotonous humdrum existence of which every detail is made enthralling by the novelist's genius.

In later years, Mr. Arnold Bennett has constantly displayed the fresh wonder of a child on being first confronted with the marvels of luxurious civilisation. He has revelled in describing success. The great hotel and the fashionable restaurant have been a constant joy to him. He is a fine literary craftsman, and he has prided himself on the fact that his attitude towards the author's profession is entirely neat and businesslike. He is always interesting and nearly always extremely amusing, and his naïve sense of wonder plays Jekyll to Hyde, his other self, the sophisticated man of the world. The most notable novel in what may be called the success-loving period is *Mr. Prohack,* a comedy of unflagging vitality and consummate craftsmanship. Recently, Mr. Bennett has in his *Riceyman Steps* returned to his interest in the unsuccessful and in the workaday world. This study of a miserly Clerkenwell second-hand bookseller is as fine a thing as Mr. Bennett has done. It evidences acute observation and an equally acute appreciation of character and of motives. His descriptions have a minuteness which for all its detail is always interesting.

§ 6

Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad, whose full name is Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski, was born in Poland in 1856. His father was a notable

Polish patriot and scholar and a translator of Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, and Alfred Vigny into Polish. In his early manhood Mr. Conrad went to Constantinople with the intention of joining the Russians in the war against the Turks, but though born in a country with no coast he felt the call of the sea and joined the French mercantile marine. After sailing for some time in French ships, he came to Lowestoft, learned English, and obtained a mate's certificate from the Board of Trade. In his *Youth and Other Tales* published in 1902 he has described his maiden voyage as an officer on an English ship. It was at Marseilles that he first boarded a vessel flying the Red Ensign, and was for the first time addressed in the English language. He had gone out with a French pilot to "a big high-class cargo steamer."

> A few strokes brought us alongside, and it was then that, for the very first time in my life, I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions —of my very dreams! And if (after thus fashioned by it in that part of me which cannot decay) I dare not claim it aloud as my own then, at any rate, the speech of my children. Thus small events grow memorable by the passage of time. As to the quality of the address itself I cannot say it was very striking. Too short for eloquence and devoid of all charm of tone, it consisted precisely of the three words "Look out there," growled out huskily above my head.

The characteristics of Mr. Conrad's art are the reflection of the incidents of his career. He has denied the story that knowing three or four languages he deliberately chose to write in English. He says: "English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption—well, yes, there was adoption; but it was

I who was adopted by the genius of the language, which directly I came out of the stammering stage made me its own so completely that its very idioms, I truly believe, had a direct action on my temperament and fashioned my still plastic character." This strange affinity for a foreign language does not make it a less stupendous fact that a Pole who could hardly speak English at twenty, has learned to write books in supple and masterly English without any betrayal that it is not his native tongue. The greatness of his achievement makes Mr. Conrad a man apart. He is with us but not of us. During the twenty years that he sailed the seas he never once met a Polish sailor, yet for all his seamanship and for all his mastery of English he is still a Pole. In temperament, definitely Slavonic, as a novelist the disciple of the great Russians, being himself a man apart, Mr. Conrad is always impressed by the isolated and lonely. In one of his books he writes of "the indestructible loneliness that surrounds, envelops, clothes every human soul from the cradle to the grave, and, perhaps, beyond."

His first novel, *Almayer's Folly,* written while he was still a sailor, was published in 1895. This was followed by *An Outcast of the Islands, The Nigger of the Narcissus,* and *Lord Jim.* Mr. Conrad's genius was recognised at once by W. E. Henley, that prince of critics, and while he had to wait some years for any great popularity he attracted from the beginning the critical and discriminating reader. *Nostromo,* one of the finest of his stories, was published in 1904, *The Secret Agent,* an amazingly ingenious detective story, in 1907, *Chance* in 1914, *Within the Tides* in 1915, *Victory* in 1915, *The Shadow-Line* in 1917, *The Arrow of Gold* in 1919, and *Rescue* in 1920. Mr. Conrad has published a fragmentary autobiography which he calls *A Personal Record,* and a volume of essays called *Notes on Life and Letters.*

As has already been suggested, the central figure of nearly all the Conrad stories is a man apart; in *Almayer's Folly* a white

man living among brown men; in *An Outcast of the Islands* a white man cut off from his fellows through his infatuation for a coloured woman; in *The Secret Agent* a man isolated by his profession; and so on.

While he was a sailor, Mr. Conrad made many voyages to the East, and the sea and the East play large parts in his dramas. No novelist has ever described with such overwhelming and yet restrained power tropical storms and hot seas and writhing luxurious scented vegetation as cruel as it is beautiful. It may almost be said that the sea and the sun are often the principal characters of his stories.

As a stylist Joseph Conrad is at least remotely akin to Henry James, and his curious preference for a narrative form in which one man tells the tale of a man who tells the tale to another who relates the conversation of two men about the hero is sometimes a little trying and bewildering.

§ 7

George Moore

George Moore was born in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1852. He studied art in London and Paris, turning to literature when after many months of hard work he discovered that painting was not his vocation. In Paris he became intimate with the great impressionist painters Monet, Manet, and Degas, and came under the literary influence of Émile Zola. Mr. George Moore's early novels *A Modern Lover,* 1883, *A Mummer's Wife,* 1884, and *A Drama in Muslin,* 1886, are definitely Zolaesque in their character. Before the appearance of these novels he had published two books of poems—*Flowers of Passion,* 1877, and *Pagan Poems,* 1881, whose titles suggest their quality.

Of his early novels *A Mummer's Wife* is the best. It is concerned with the sordid unmoral life of a number of second-rate players, but though at the time of its publication it was banned by the libraries, the novel itself can certainly not be called im-

moral, and its "daring" is far less than that of many of the novels of to-day. Mr. George Moore arrived as a novelist with the publication of *Esther Waters,* a fine, sympathetic, and most human story, in 1894. By this time he had sloughed a good deal of the Zola influence. In *Esther Waters* there is no unnecessary insistence on the unpleasant. It is one of the few English novels that has a servant-girl for a heroine, and the story is told straightforwardly and faithfully, no essentials being omitted and no unessentials related. Esther Waters, as Mr. Moore presents her, is a splendid woman. Undaunted by misfortune, unconquered by circumstance, she remains always the mistress of her fate.

Mr. Moore is never modest in appraising his own work, and of *Esther Waters* he has said: "I sat wondering how it could have happened to me to write the book that among all books I should have cared most to write, and to have written it so much better than I ever dreamed it could be written."

Evelyn Innes, published in 1898, has been well described by Mr. John Freeman as a novel of intellectual sensualism.

The beginning of the Irish literary movement and Irish sympathy with the Boers sent Mr. George Moore back to Ireland for a ten years' residence, during which he wrote his remarkable novel *The Lake,* the story of an Irish priest and a village schoolmistress. In this book the realist has become almost a symbolist. "There is a lake in every man's heart, and he listens to its monotonous whisper year after year, more and more attentive till at last he ungirds."

In later years Mr. Moore's most considerable achievement is the *Brook Kerith,* in which with characteristic audacity and fine literary skill he re-tells the greatest story in the world. Mr. Moore has always been fond of writing about himself and his adventures. *The Confessions of a Young Man* was published in 1888 and *Memoirs of my Dead Life* in 1906. It was these two books which caused Miss Susan Mitchell to write: "Some men kiss and tell, some men kiss and never tell, Mr. George Moore

tells but never kisses." The elaborate *Hail and Farewell* published in three volumes in 1911, 1912, and 1914 is an intensely intellectual biography unique in our times and in some respects to be compared to Rousseau's *Confessions.* Mr. George Moore has written several plays and a volume of art criticism, *Modern Painting,* published in 1893.

§ 8

James Matthew Barrie

It is remarkable that three of Scotland's greatest men of letters, Burns, Carlyle, and Barrie, were all born in peasants' cots. The cottage in which, in the year 1866, James Matthew Barrie saw the light, stood in the little village of Kirriemuir, which he was afterwards to make immortal under the name of Thrums. He learnt his first lessons at Dumfries School, and continued his studies at Edinburgh University, where he took the degree of Master of Arts. Doctor Johnson remarked that in the eyes of a Scot the finest view in his native country is the high-road to England. Barrie, at any rate, took that road, and obtaining a post on a Nottingham newspaper, began that career as a writer to which his whole nature irresistibly called him. There he earned three guineas a week as a political leader-writer and also, it is said, contributed words of wisdom under the motto, "Now step I forth to whip Hypocrisy." He has sketched his own portrait at that age as a shy, awkward, and melancholy youth, given much to books and solitude, who might be seen at night mooning under the walls of the Castle with his thoughts "three hundred miles due north." But he was bent on London. Some of his articles had been accepted by the *St. James's Gazette,* and he wrote to the Editor, James Greenwood, to ask his advice. "For God's sake, don't come!" was the reply. Barrie's response was to move straight to London, where he settled down for three years as a free-lance. Then came a real struggle for life. He has himself recorded the merits of a penny bun as a dinner, when

Photo: Topical Press Agency (taken on the occasion of his installation as Rector of St. Andrews University.)

SIR JAMES M. BARRIE, O.M

The most whimsical novelist and dramatist of our time.

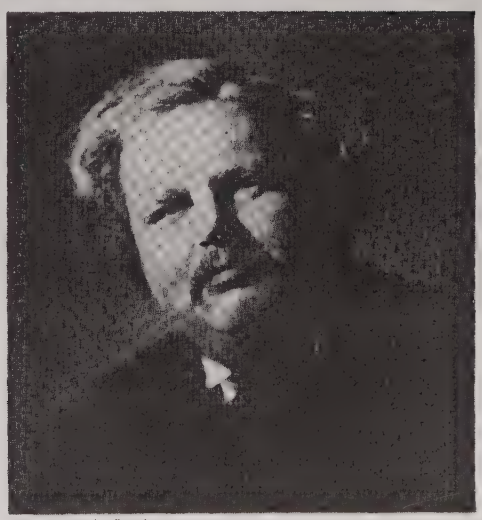

Photo: F. A. Swaine

G. K. CHESTERTON,

A master of paradox, and an apostle of good cheer

Photo Stage Photo Co.

"WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS," BY SIR J. M. BARRIE.

John Shand, the needy student having agreed to accept the encouragement and help of the Wylie family in the prosecution of his studies on the condition that he will marry the unattractive Maggie Wylie prepares to leave the little Scotch [illegible] by the window

expanded internally by a cup of coffee. But his articles, especially those in *The British Weekly* under the name of Gavin Ogilvy, began to attract notice. Republished in the volumes *My Lady Nicotine* and *When a Man's Single,* in *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and in *A Window in Thrums* (1889), he showed that a new writer had arisen with a gift of genius all his own. *The Little Minister,* which followed, is really one of the Idylls on a larger scale. With the *Little White Bird,* a story for children, and about them, but the delight of child-lovers of all ages—as *Peter Pan* was later—the new planet which had swum into the world's ken was rounded and complete.

Now, what was the nature of this new gift of genius? It had three sides to it. First, a power of drawing real-life characters, especially those of a Scotch village, the peasants, the shopkeepers, and the elders, with such vividness that the reader seems to live among them. Secondly, a love of children, and an understanding of them, only possible to one who had kept "a young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks." Thirdly, the different, and indeed opposite, faculty of bringing into being creatures, such as Babbie, Lob, and Mary Rose, who seem to have strayed in from fairyland. But all his characters, whether of real life or fancy, are touched with a peculiar kind of loving humour which can hardly be defined; it is unlike that of any other writer, and indeed has become familiarly known as "Barrieism." It seldom comes from the mouth of a humorist uttering a joke, but often from the lips of a child or of a solemn person saying something unexpectedly funny without intending it. When Maggie Shand tells John that she is afraid that after they are married he may grow tired of her and cast eyes on other women, a thing which she has read of as having been known to happen, and when John replies with intense solemnity, "Not in Scotland, Maggie, not in Scotland"—that is a Barrieism. When the little boy in *A Kiss for Cinderella* is having his supper in his cot and is told that if he eats so much jam he will be sick to-mor-

row, and when he springs up, crying in exultation, "I shall be sick to-night!"—that is a Barrieism.

The nature of Barrie's signal qualities, therefore, may be expressed as an intimate association of humour and sentiment—humour that is simple and direct, yet often subtle and suggestive —both humour and sentiment the offspring of an ingenious intellect and a cunning whimsical imagination.

The books that exhibit Barrie at his fullest power are perhaps *Sentimental Tommy,* which has Thrums for a background, and its sequel *Tommy and Grizel.* As studies of child-life they are not only amazingly fine, but such as could have issued from no other mind. Tommy, grown up, is also a marvellous picture of the soul of a poser and philanderer, a youth who loved make-believe until a great passion could not thrill his blood. Grizel, the girl with the crooked smile and the straight soul, knew that he was for evermore a boy, "and boys cannot love. Oh, is it not cruel to ask a boy to love?" Grizel is perhaps Barrie's finest character.

Barrie as a playwright has been referred to in another chapter, but here we might say that when he broke into the theatre with the long list of plays, from *Walker, London,* down to *Mary Rose,* he did so without the slightest knowledge of the technique of the stage, and with no inkling, apparently, that such a thing existed. His plays broke, systematically, every law held sacred by the critics. But the spectators laughed and shook, or in turn were touched to tears. The wizard had waved his wand and they were mesmerized.

§ 9

Mr. W. W. Jacobs, with his studies of riverside characters and the skippers of coasting boats, has carried on the Dickens tradition and has shown something of the master's appreciation of the humour of simple men and simple life. Mr. Jacobs has

created types whom it is not easy to forget, and his fun is always natural, unforced, and delightful. It is a remarkable, but perfectly intelligible, fact that Mr. Jacobs has been able to draw continuously on the experience and impressions of his early life in Erith. His work is the cocoon of that and of little else.

Mr. Israel Zangwill is notable mainly for the intimate pictures of Jewish life in his earlier novels. The late Maurice Hewlett, a writer of versatile power and many moods, will perhaps be longest remembered for the charming fancy of *The Forest Lovers.*

Mrs. Humphry Ward

The late Mrs. Humphry Ward was one of the most important and most interesting of the great army of women novelists. She was the granddaughter of Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, and the niece of Matthew Arnold. She inherited a "cultured moral austerity" which found its expression in the novels which she began to write at the beginning of the period with which we are dealing. Mrs. Ward lived at Oxford at a time when religious liberalism had supplanted the Catholic fervour of the Tractarians. She was the apologist of "honest doubt," and her *Robert Elsmere,* a novel with a purpose if ever one was written, which owed much of its success to the appreciation of William Ewart Gladstone, is a defence of the doubter and the suggestion that ethical theism is to be preferred to orthodox faith. In her later novels Mrs. Ward to some extent modified her position, but her importance in literary history is due to the fact that she deliberately used fiction as a means of discussing religious problems, just as Mr. Wells has used it more recently.

Lewis Carroll (1832-98) was the most gifted of the Victorian writers for children, and for his incomparable *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* generations of boys and girls will call him blessed. They are unrivalled in

their whimsical fancy and their delicious humour. Lewis Carroll was the pen-name of Charles Dodgson, an Oxford mathematical tutor who was also the author of volumes dealing with geometry and trigonometry of which he is said to have been far prouder than of the Alice books. Happily Mr. Dodgson loved children, and Alice was the result of his love.

The modern popularity of the novel induces most professional writers to adopt that form of literary expression, and the essayist is comparatively inconspicuous in the story of modern English literature. Among living English essayists Mr. E. V. Lucas has perhaps the most firmly established reputation. We have heard him described as "a pleasant cultured trifler." This is a mere half-truth. Mr. Lucas has never been, or tried to be, profound. Yet he can touch more chords than is generally supposed. His literary criticism is that of tasting and appreciation; his outlook on life is never wide, but it is always original and genuine. He is an essayist in things as they happen and in people who flit by. He observes and savours, and does both within the control of an inborn critical faculty and a fine tact. It has been well said that a good critic is a critic of everything, and E. V. Lucas is a genial critic of everything that he meets, or that he seeks, in life. He has written the best biography of Charles Lamb and as an essayist he has many of Lamb's qualities. The following short passage from an essay on the Zoo is characteristic:

> And so I came away, having seen everything in the Zoo except the most advertised animal of all—the pickpocket. To see so many visitors to the cages wearing a patronising air, and to hear their remarks of condescension or dislike, as animal after animal is passed under review, has a certain piquancy in the contiguity of this ever present notice, "Beware of Pickpockets," warning man against—what?—man. Lions, at any rate, one feels (desirable as it may be to capture their skins for hearthrugs), pick no pockets.

In Thirty Years

During the last thirty years there have been a considerable number of talented English novelists concerned to tell stories and comparatively uninterested in philosophy, form, or the interpretation of life. Among the more distinguished of them are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Hall Caine, Sir H. Rider Haggard, Mr. Stanley Weyman, Mr. Anthony Hope, Mr. E. F. Benson, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, the late Marion Crawford, and the late Henry Seton Merriman. Miss May Sinclair is without question the most gifted of the living women writers whose reputations are well established. As a stylist she challenges comparison with Mr. Joseph Conrad. With the younger writers whose reputations are still in the making this OUTLINE has no concern.

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